Life La Life

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It was a year after the events of Kill la kill, and life has been swell for Ryūko, Satsuki and Mako who happened to have been transferred to the same high school. However a ghost from their past throws their lives into chaos while this spectre of said past begins their own new life leading to an unseen force who wish to enact the will of the late Ragyō Kiryūin begin their attack.

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Tied together

A sunny morning just like any other reared its head as the clouds cleared out for the blue sky to peak through. crisp clean grass rustled in the wind as kids made their way out of their houses towards their schools and two silhouettes walked down the path in the distance.

Soon their voices could be heard ringing out "did you remember your homework?" one voice being a stern voice with a familiar regale presence.

Another voice responds "er yeah- yeah of course! I mean absolutely…" this voice just as familiar, but much more rough and relaxed although the air of panic could be heard in each of their words.

"Then show me" the stern voice replies as the silhouettes draw near and we begin to recognise them "show me your homework Ryūko."

Satsuki in all her brilliance walked side by side with Ryūko, her long black hair and pale blue eyes shone brightly in the morning sun, similarly Ryūko's red line in her hair caught the light as they strolled their way down the road. The two wore what appeared to be high school uniforms, being black skirts with black knee socks and white laceless shoes and a black jacket with red and blue lining and three buttons running down the middle, while a bow coloured with a similar red and blue was tied at the collar of their white shirt. Ryūko tried to avoid meeting her sisters gaze as Satsuki appeared to stare into her soul.

"ooooooooh Ryūkoooooo" suddenly a projectile at unexpected speeds came flying towards the two girls, Ryūko buckled under the pressure of the impact, and revealed that Mako was now holding onto her with both her legs and her arms with a wide smile on her face her auburn brown hair and her plump face glistened with joy.

Ryūko met Mako's smile with her own "hey Mako" Ryūko picked up the joy filled girl and placed her on her feet, "you're just as energetic as usual"

Mako replied with vigorous speed "I'm even MORE energetic today! when i got up this morning my mom said its finally time, then she let me drink coffee! it tasted really good a bit bitter though but I still really enjoyed it-"

Ryūko cut her off with a look of mixed amusement and concern. "Jeeze what the heck was she thinking…?"

Satsuki smiled politely at Mako "good morning Mako."

Suddenly the voracious Mako jumped to Satsuki hugging her tightly, Satsuki began to blush as Mako smiled replying "Good morning satsukiiii! you look even more pretty today! did you use a new hair conditioner? you gotta tell me!"

Satsuki calmly placed a hand on Mako's head before closing her eyes and smiling warmly at Mako continued rambling in the background she said, "It's good to see you too."

Ryūko looked far more relaxed now saying "well we better get going so we don't be late to school…"

This caused Satsuki's gaze to shift towards Ryūko looking sternly in expectation "Don't think I've forgotten about you Ryūko…" Ryūko's face returned to dread as the three girls approached a school gate ready(ish) for the day that awaits them.

Upon opening the front door to the school, the sound of students chattering overwhelmed all other noise in the background, with the sounds of steps and closing lockers underlying their words. The three approached their lockers, replacing their regular trainers for brown smooth shoes, Satsuki opening her locker was met with overflowing letters falling immediately out. Satsuki ignored them placing her shoes calmly in the locker. Mako appeared to pull out

various pieces of food out of her locker including a chicken leg and a large slice of water melon.

Ryūko watched in semi confusion but mostly out of fulfilled expectation as she sighed with a smile placing her shoes in her own locker. "Mako are you sure its a good idea to stuff all that crap in your locker?"

Mako seemed unbothered by the question replying "Yup! aren't I so smart? if I stuff my food in my locker then I don't have to sneak it into school!"

Ryūko nods in odd agreement while Satsuki looks rather confused asking "But don't you have to sneak it into the locker in the first place?"

The conversation is seemingly interrupted as three girls giggled and ran past them while one bumps into Satsuki "oh! I'm sorry Satsuki!"

Satsuki replied with, "It's quite alright."

The girl then runs away to catch up with her friends, Ryūko looking curiously in the direction of where the girls ran to, "is there a festival going on today or something?"

Satsuki looked calmly with her usual stern face in the same direction, "If there is this would be the first I've heard of it."

Mako looked as well in bliss ignorance as the three begin moving again towards their classroom. They climb up a flight of stairs passing two boys in black trousers, black jackets with red and blue lining and a white shirt with a red and blue tie, chewing bubble gum and placing cards on a window sill that they are sitting on.

They move down the hall passing various other students having conversations and walking towards their various classrooms. The three arrive at their classroom door beneath a sign displaying "6C" they open the door and are met with the view of various other

students sitting at desks doing various activities. A young man with a fair number of freckles sat his desk with a book standing at the front of the desk while the boy played with various figures. Ashy looking girl with frizzy hair sat at her desk buried in a book seemingly trying to avoid being noticed by everyone else in the classroom. Satsuki, Ryūko and Mako sat in their desks at the right middle side of the room, and as they sat down the three girls that ran past them in the hall stepped inside and sat at their own desks on the left side of the room.

The three girls then loudly discussed with one another captivating the attention of other students in the class causing Ryūko and Satsuki to overhear what they are talking about. "so what about this new kid?"

Someone had quickly cut in, "I heard they're American!-"

While another interrupts, "no way, I heard they're French!"

One of the male students asks the three girls, "Is it a dude or a chick?"

But before the girls had a chance to reply a female student not part of the group of three girls asks, "Are they hot?"

But again the girls have no chance to reply, this time however is due to a tall man entering through the door to the classroom, he wore a grey jacket with white shirt and black tie, along with grey trousers, he had dark brown messy hair, and large bags under his eyes with a poorly shaved chin. He appears to have a permanent tiredness locked onto his face as he stumbles to the podium at the centrepiece of the room. A red haired girl at the front right corner of the room immediately stands commanding all the other students to "Stand!" as well then says after the students follows this she says "Bow!" with the students doing so as well, then finishing with "Sit!" causing all the students to drop back into their seats.

The teacher speaks up with a low pitched commanding voice "well I hope you had a nice weekend, I spent most of mine marking tests which was a pain in my ass but you did have homework so I'm sure you can empathise."

A heavy groan seemed to flow through the class as Ryūko sweated profusely feeling Satsuki's gaze on her from the desk to her left, looking expectantly in regards to the homework.

It wasn't long till the teacher spoke up again, "Alright everyone pull out your textbooks and get ready for today's lesson." Ryūko then noticed him mumbling under his breath; "Damn it they're supposed to be here by now…" although she shrugged it off and proceeded to pull out her textbook.

Suddenly, the door to the class on the right side of the room by the blackboard, swung open with a violent crash bringing it to the attention of all the individuals in the classroom.

The teacher looks confused for a moment before realising who it was, "you're late." He said with an annoyed tone.

A voice from out the door replied with a quite shy and embarrassed tone, "I-I'm sorry… I… I got lost."

The voice's resemblance hits Satsuki and Ryūko like a gun shot.

The teacher replied with a sigh, "Its fine since you are new but I expect you to be mostly on time from here on, now come in and introduce yourself."

The origin of the voice stepped inside the classroom as the epiphany made its approach on Ryūko's and Satsuki's faces. What stood at the front of the class was a young girl, she had long flowing hair that reached even down to her feet, she had a warm smile, the same style of uniform, a white Japanese style eye-patch and one bright shining blue eye.

She spoke with the eerie resemblance like a ghost that had clawed its way out of the past, "Hello! my name is Nui Harime, nice to meet all of you!"

Calm before the storm

Immediately both Ryūko and Satsuki was standing at their desks. They were silent but the sounds of their seats jutting back and the sudden movement of them standing brought them to the forefront of the classroom's attention and even woke up Mako who joined the others in their observation of the two girls. Everyone looking at them seemed confused by the sudden act including the teacher and Nui who stood at the front of the classroom. Satsuki's and Ryūko's gazes were fixed on Nui, with a look of mortal terror displayed on their faces.

The teacher was the first to speak up, "Are you alright you two?"

Ryūko and Satsuki looked awkwardly around them to see the other students staring at them in confusion, as if they had snapped out of a trance.

Ryūko is the one to reply to the question of the teacher, "e-er yeah! Just felt a chill in the room, that's all."

As the two girls sat back into their seats trying to not draw any more attention from the class. The teacher seemed to shrug this off as the nuances of the foolish young adults.

He then gestured to Nui, "there's a seat over there at the back." referring to a seat on the top right-hand side of the room by the class window.

Nui's eye seem to glow with excitement as she made her way over to her seat. Meanwhile Satsuki and Ryūko's expressions were filled with tension, both talking quietly like spies witnessing their target.

"What the hell is happening?" Ryūko asked in desperation.

However Satsuki was cold and analytical about the situation but the pressure of the circumstance was still visible on her face as she

replied "I don't know but we are going to have to wait for the right time to observe and assess these strange events."

As Nui sat down the occupants of the classed rushed to gather around her barring the Red-haired girl at the front who looked disapprovingly at the other students, Ryūko, Satsuki and mako who had already fallen back asleep. Nui looked incredibly uncomfortable as the crowd of students, sent a barrage of questions her way, ranging from where she is from, to if she is single, to what kind hair product she uses. Satsuki had managed to spy out Nui from the group of students who seemed particularly shy, much to Satsuki's surprise who contemplated if this was a new, rather convincing act put on by Nui.

The teacher attempted to gain the attention of the students "Now now everyone, settle down" but this was to no avail as the students continued to chatter in their gathering around the overwhelmed Nui.

The teacher then changed his strategy, "Well I guess this means you don't mind this cutting into your break time huh."

Upon hearing this the class then immediately sat back in their seats to quell the annoyance of the teacher. With this the lesson had begun, many students showing their ranges of attention from obvious boredom to stringent attention. Nui appeared to reside within the middle of these two extremes, as she worriedly took down notes while also at times glancing out the window in longingly. Lesson to lesson passed by with each teacher showing their own varying levels of enthusiasm for education, while Satsuki and Ryūko continued to carefully observe Nui. Once lunch time had arrived the class resumed their crowding around Nui but this time, she attempted to answer their questions seemingly feeling more in place and less shy than before. But the words she eked out was not enough to satisfy the appetites of her classmates who continued to barrage her with questions.

However, one question seemed to break out from the rest "what are you doing here Nui?" as the classmates shifted to reveal Ryūko

standing in front of Nui's desk.

Nui responded confused "I guess it looked like a nice school…"

Ryūko was wasting no time replying with "That's not what I mean, and you know it."

Nui continued to look in confusion at Ryūko, "I'm sorry but… I really don't."

Ryūko appeared frustrated and was prepared to respond angrily but realized that she had caught the attention of her classmates and preferred to not show that to them. And so Ryūko walked away sitting back at her desk next to Satsuki who quietly ate and Mako who feasted on her smuggled in food.

A few more lessons have passed, and they were back with their homeroom teacher. He was reading off a few more notes after he had finished chastising those who forgot their homework which appeared to be most of the class.

The bell rings, and the teacher shuts his book, "Well it's about damn time, you're all dismissed."

Many of the class members then got up and made their way out of the classroom while a few of them stuck around to discuss various things. Nui was one of the ones that were making their way out although she was not quite as quick as the others. Satsuki and Ryūko saw their opportunity as Ryūko grabbed Mako's hand and slowly got up themselves. They walked out of the classroom maintaining distance from Nui who happily crossed the hall and was now making her way down the stairs. They continued this for quite a distance, leaving the school and walking down the streets not too far but not too close to the seemingly oblivious Nui. Eventually Nui was on a street where there was no one else but her and the ones tailing her. Ryūko saw her chance running up to Nui and pushing her into an alley way. Nui fell onto the ground without much resistance, and after she recovered from the blow, she was looking at Ryūko who

stood above her with a menacing aggressive look. Satsuki stood close behind Ryūko while Mako was peering around the corner of the alley worriedly.

"Give it up Nui!" Ryūko commanded with a heavy intimidating voice.

Nui was picking herself up off the ground, "wh-what?" Nui replied revealing in her voice a mix of confusion and distress.

"I SAID GIVE IT UP!" Ryūko shouted as she grabbed Nui by the cuff and pressed her against the wall with a loud slam.

"There's no point to continuing such a ridiculous ploy, now tell us what you are planning, Nui Harime." Satsuki spoke with a cold and intimidating tone, her voice feeling as heavy as the impact of Ryūko's attacks.

Nui continued her distressed onset saying "I… I don't understand…" While she shuddered under Ryūko's grip on her collar.

"You really think you can just come back into our lives like this?! After everything you've done! You Bitch! I should have killed you myself!" Ryūko's hold seemed to intensify along with her glare until she noticed.

Tears. Tears were rolling down from Nui's remaining eye, her voice was shriek and pathetic as she appeared to plead, "I'm sorry… I don't know what I did… but I'm sorry… I don't want to hurt anyone… I just… I just want to live a normal life… so please… let me go…"

Ryūko relented, loosing her grasp, both her face and Satsuki's filled with shock. Nui coughed for a moment before looking back at Ryūko, and within this moment she seemed to be filled with a sort of familiarity, before snapping back into distress and running past Satsuki and Ryūko out of the alley way, attempting to wipe the tears from her eyes. Ryūko and Satsuki just stood there as Mako looked at them with concern.

Ryūko seemed distraught, her eyes covered by shadow as she stared down at the ground, "I don't understand…"

Satsuki then grabbed her sister's hand and walked out of the alley. She continued walking while she pulled out her phone out of her left-hand side pocket and then pressed her phone against her ear.

A phone rings in a lounge of an apartment, clothes strewn about on furniture and various parts of the room's floor. A funky tune plays from a stereo as the sound of a tap running attempts to pierce through the sound of the music from the nearby kitchen that is directly connected to the lounge. A figure is seen partially dancing to the music as they wash various plates and cutlery then placing them on the drying rack, all of a sudden, this ceases as they seem to have heard the sound of the phone. Once they turn the corner its revealed to be the one and only Mikisugi, topless of course wearing black trousers with a drying towel slung over his shoulder.

He switches off the music then answers the phone with a flourish, "hello? Mikisugi talking."

The voice emanating from the phone spoke with a cold and assertive tone, "Its Satsuki."

Mikisugi sits on the couch with a relaxed smile. "And what do I owe the pleasure?" His arm flung over the side.

"We will need to speak in person" Satsuki replied.

Mikisugi's smile to switch to an inconvenienced frown, "you sure this can't wait till later?" he reached over to pick up a can off the coffee table.

"It's about Nui Harime."

This is all Satsuki had to say to cause Mikisugi to slam his can back down and sit up from his relaxed position, his face now unveiling a strong intense look of worry.

"How close are you to my place?" he asked calm and cool.

Satsuki answered with "5 mins away."

Mikisugi closed his eyes in reprieve and replied, "Alright be here as soon as possible."

He had hung up the phone and appeared to be selecting a new contact as he stood up. He placed the phone against his ear and an answer arrived not too long after, "Yo it's me" Mikisugi said just as intense as before, "We got a problem."

The door clicked open to what appeared to be a much smaller apartment than before, two small feet stepping inside, from the cool night air. Who walked inside appeared to be Nui Harime who immediately collapsed upon taking off her shoes at the entrance.

"Ugh that shift sucked…" she crawled her way over to the tiny lounge and slipped underneath her kotatsu table, "didn't help that I was almost late… uguuuu my manager would have been so mad…"

Her face revealed her tiredness reflected in her words, although it seemed to change as she remembered why she was almost late in the first place.

"Those girls… why do they seem so familiar…?" her thoughts spewed out of her mouth as though her mind was leaking out into the world, "And why do the scary ones gotta be so cute…"

She placed her hand on her eyepatch as she laid down on the floor looking up at the ceiling lost in thought. "She seemed to know me… but I don't know her… is she really just a bully or is there more to this? At any rate, I should try to be nice to her so maybe we could be friends… I don't… want… to be alone…"

Nui Harime seemed to speak her last few words as she drifted to sleep underneath the kotatsu table, before suddenly waking up shouting "Crap! I gotta remember to turn off the lights!"

A few knocks on the door roused the sitting Mikisugi who continued to relax in his apartment looking incredibly bored "5 mins she said…"

He walks over to the door opening to reveal Satsuki, Mako and Ryūko standing in front of the door in the darkness of the night, Mako was doing a little wave while Satsuki stood there as calmly as ever, while Ryūko had her arms crossed in frustration.

"Fashionably late hm?" Mikisugi smiled smugly.

Satsuki lost her composure for a moment before replying. "We… got a little lost."

Mikisugi was not buying the story "It's been hours."

Satsuki replied while both hers and Ryūko's faces displayed a level of embarrassment, "ok maybe more than a little, it seems I put the wrong address into the app…"

Mikisugi sighed as he turned and gestured for the three to follow him inside, "Never mind, make yourselves at home."

The three followed Mikisugi, treading carefully weary of their environment as they seemed to hold suspicions of the various surfaces they could touch. Mikisugi passed through the lounge into the kitchen flicking the switch on a kettle and setting down mugs on the counter as the three girls planted themselves down on the sofa holding as much suspicion of the sofa as they did of the various other surfaces in the room. Mikisugi set the mugs in front of the three girls, although they seemed apprehensive about drinking the contents.

He then sat down in a chair set on the right-hand side of the coffee table, "Explain."

Ryūko and Satsuki proceeded to recount the events of the last day.

"Jeez… and here I thought I wouldn't have to take nudist beach off stand-by for a while yet then this goes and happens." Mikisugi seemed relaxed and composed although his words revealed a level of surprise.

Satsuki crossed her arms and closed her eyes, "Indeed… although the way she came off was strange…"

Mikisugi took a sip of his own mug and gave his response "It's because of the way she reacted wasn't it?"

Satsuki nodded in return "Yes, she seemed strangely genuine, I can usually see through her facades, but this one… it caught me off guard."

Ryūko chimes in "yeah! It was super weird; I didn't expect it…"

Mikisugi placed his own cup down on the table with a sigh crossing his own arms, "Well it doesn't matter, whatever the case is we will have to take her in, I already called into work, we're taking agents off standby."

Satsuki and Ryūko nodded in agreement while Mako seemed rather troubled as she began to speak up "Are you sure this is the right thing to do?"

Ryūko looks at Mako with concern "Mako…" While the others show a spark of surprise.

Mako continued, "How do we know it's really the old Nui? What if it's a doppelganger type thing? One time my dad met this guy that looked exactly like him!"

Mikisugi looked at mako with warm rejection, "I'm sorry Mako but we can't take that chance."

Mako is persistent however, "But she seemed so sad when Ryūko was angry…"

Ryūko replied in Mikisugi's stead, "Mako we're talking about the same Nui that tried to murder you."

Without skipping a beat Mako replied "But didn't you try to murder me too?"

A moment of silence fills the air… "Well yeah- but that was different…" Ryūko broke the silence, seemingly taken aback by this as she remembers that she did indeed try to kill her.

Satsuki was next to reply in her usual calm and commanding demeanour "Mako I understand this might be difficult to understand for you, but Nui is a threat to humanity, she cannot be allowed to exist."

Mako seemed rather frustrated by this but seemed to give in after Satsuki's dominating argument.

Mikisugi continued, disregarding the argument of the troubled Mako, "Alright I'll have some agents ready, keep an eye on her during class then after school try to lead her to an isolated area, maybe that alley from before since its on the way to her residence anyway, then we'll swoop in and scoop her up, got it?"

Ryūko and Satsuki nodded in agreement, then proceeded to lead Mako outside of the apartment with Mikisugi seeing them to the door. They stood outside the apartment as the door closes, Satsuki and Ryūko started to walk towards the steps that lead out of the apartment complex while Mako suddenly stopped looking as frustrated as before.

Ryūko and Satsuki turned around towards Mako to hear the remark "This just seems really mean…"

Ryūko in response walked up to Mako and gave her a warm hug, she then took her hand, and the three girls made their way home.

Unveiling cracks

The morning was overcast as students made their way across the many paths, sharing their conversations in the cool morning air with the smell of the recent rain still emanating from the moist pavement. Among them was Ryūko, Satsuki and Mako who were approaching the school. Ryūko and Satsuki held a foreboding look as it was obvious their anticipation of the events to come was circulating in their mind.

They made their way to the lockers and Ryūko spoke to Mako softly as she swapped over her shoes, "Mako, you should head home after school, this could get dangerous."

Mako placed a croquette in her mouth, her face filled with melancholy, "Ok…"

Ryūko placed her hand on Mako's head and snuggled close to her for a moment "Everything's gonna be ok… you trust me, right?"

Mako nodded her head and Satsuki looked in concern from behind Ryūko.

The three made their way into the class, looking over to see the empty seat at Nui's desk.

"Crap, maybe I scared her from coming to school." Ryūko said under her breath to Satsuki as the three settled down into their seats.

All of a sudden, the door to the class opened revealing Nui who stood at the entrance, she then immediately started walking towards Ryūko and Satsuki's desk. The tension raised as Ryūko and Satsuki expected the worst from the quickly approaching Nui.

Nui was in front of them as Ryūko was about to raise her voice, when suddenly, Nui immediately bowed surprising all three.

"I'm sorry!" Nui shouted arousing further surprise.

"W-what?" Ryūko was caught in utter confusion taken aback by this turn of events.

"I'm Sorry!" Nui shouted again, all the class' attention was on this strange occurrence.

"What do you mean you're sorry? We're the ones that's supposed to apologize to you!" Ryūko exclaimed in frustrated confusion.

"Oh er… sorry…" Nui appears to regather herself, with a look of guilt on her face, "It just felt like I did something wrong… so I wanted to make things better so we could be friends."

Nui' look of sadness further confused Ryūko, "You didn't do anything wrong, it was just a misunderstanding, we're sorry."

Satsuki chimes in to agree with Ryūko "She's correct, we deeply apologise."

Nui's eye brightens up and she blushes a bit in response to their apologies "T-thank you…" she the wandered over to her seat sitting down and pulling out a text book to review her notes.

The day passed by with lesson after lesson with Ryūko and Satsuki keeping a watchful eye on Nui as she goes from almost asleep to alert in the span of a few moments in a lesson. They reached the last lesson of the day, and as the bell rang to signify to time to head home, the plan was in effect.

Satsuki stepped carefully towards Nui and spoke in a calm, tentative manner, "Nui I was hoping we could spend some time together to try and make up for the horrible mistake me and my sister made."

Nui perked up upon hearing Satsuki's words, "R-really?!"

Satsuki nodded to reassure Nui "Yes, I believe you deserve some reparations for our awful acts."

Nui blushed heavily seemingly rather flustered "W-well… thank you, I'll tell you what time I'm available…"

Satsuki calmly responded in affirmation "Of course."

Satsuki returned to her desk to see Ryūko return as well from the back, "Were you successful?" Satsuki questioned.

Nui suddenly started spouting loudly from her desk, "Huh?! Where is it!?"

Ryūko then revealed to Satsuki she is holding a stylish inkwell pen.

Satsuki walks back over to Nui showing concern, "What's wrong Nui did you lose something?"

Nui looks up at Satsuki worriedly "my pen… it was inkwell and its really nice! I thought I had it just a moment ago, but it's gone!"

Satsuki put her hand on her chin putting on an expression of thinking "Wait are you sure you had it today?"

Nui mixes her worried expression with confusion "Huh?"

Satsuki began to elaborate "Well back in the alleyway yesterday I saw an inkwell pen, I wasn't sure if it was yours or someone else had dropped it there, it had this white and pink styling, with these swirly lines."

Nui looked further confused "That does sound like mine, but then how?-"

Satsuki interrupts "Well how about me and my sister come with you to that alley way to help you check?"

Nui flails her arms around seeming shocked by the proposition, "I-I couldn't possibly ask you-"

Again Satsuki interrupts, "Trust me it's no trouble at all, besides this is a good opportunity for us to make it up to you about our grievances."

Nui blushes heavily while looking down at her desk. "O-oh okay…"

Ryūko and Satsuki nod at each other subtly before following Nui out of the classroom. Ryūko waves at Mako who waves in return frowning and letting out a quiet whine of concern.

Nui walked onward, glancing nervously at the girls who walked behind them. Her thoughts were overrun with worries and fear, yet she was unable to leave the path she agreed on.

"Nui?" Ryūko's words made Nui jump, "The streets that way" Ryūko pointed out to Nui gesturing in a direction to their left, her words were passive aggressive sounding more on the lines of accusations than corrections.

"O-oh r-right…" Nui shook where she stood, her nervousness displayed all over her face as she turned to walked in the direction pointed out by Ryūko. They approached the alley way,

Nui's eyes were fixed on the ground, and as she entered Ryūko and Satsuki stopped at the entrance. "So, do you know what kind of position it would be?"

Neither Satsuki nor Ryūko answered causing a moment of silence to occur.

Nui turned around displaying the fear on her face, "you're gonna beat me up, again aren't you?"

Satsuki replies cold and commanding, "That won't be necessary."

Suddenly, a few needles seemed to rain upon Nui from above planting themselves in her body. "I… can't… move…" Nui struggled to speak as her body stiffens in place.

Three large machines fall from above revealing themselves to be DTRs piloted by nudist beach agents. Nui's consciousness began to leave her as she heard an agent say "target secured" before her vision completely fading out.

Nui awakened in a clear white room on a matching bed attached to the wall. She looked around her seeming nothing else in this featureless room.

"Oh crap… oh crap oh crap oh crap!" she began to panic, looking about the room, "I'm in an experiment chamber!"

She was interrupted by the room suddenly shifting around her, objects started to phase in to the room, becoming less and less transparent, mannequins situated around the walls, various toys, dolls and teddies coloured in many shades of pink as well as fittingly coloured pink cushions and pillows all appearing within the room. This only served to confuse Nui till eventually she saw a little girl in a pink frilly dress appear scribbling on a piece of paper on the floor. The child disappeared to enter the room once again and the room appeared to change to reveal largely different locations including larger chambers, bathing areas along with various cities and shady places. She continued to watch as the life this child unfurled in front of her eyes in a matter of minutes, showing her to be the original Nui Harime, experiencing the life this doppelganger watching seemed to have forgot.

returning to the alley way, the agents approached the unconscious Nui's body, one speaking into an earpiece, "Preparing for extraction."

However… they are stopped in their tracks. The shock filled the air as red fibers appeared to rise out of Nui, they began to swirl around her body which began to rise and float into the air, the agents fired more needles at Nui but the needles they fired appeared to the hit out of the air by the fibers.

Ryūko attempted to shout above the chaos "What the hell is going on?!"

But her question would go unanswered as the fibers continued to swirl. All of a sudden the fibers cease their moments and gather around Nui forming a ball of red fibers, however a gap seemed to open up revealing a dark space, a single eye appearing in that space resembling Nui's eye then another object beside it, a purple eye patch resembling the kanji for "Nui" her original eyepatch. The ball blows apart revealing Nui Harime standing where in the same place she collapsed now with her original large pigtail twirls, her large pink bow, her original grand couturier outfit and most strikingly; her purple eye-patch. The agents attempted to Fire upon her again, but to no avail, as Nui easily dodged their attacks and with a mere flick of her wrist the agent's DTRs fell apart. Nui turned to Ryūko for a moment who was frozen along with Satsuki in their bewilderment. Nui locked eyes directly with Ryūko before she jumped from wall to wall of the alley way till she had reached the roof tops of the buildings.

The Nui in the white room witnessed a great many things, all of which appeared to be from the life of the previous Nui. She was speechless, the more she knew the less she understood and yet it all made sense. She never thought too hard about her past, but the more she had thought about it, the murkier it became. She had no past and yet she was here inexplicably. The room suddenly started to fade around her becoming transparent, revealing her to be floating above the ground and moving at a high speed while another version of herself dressed in a frilly dress leapt across roof tops while acting like she was merely skipping, a vision of the past brought back to life.

"W-what the?!" the floating Nui appeared shocked looking about in a panic.

The sight of the floating see through doppelganger seemed to capture the attention of the grand couturier who stopped almost casually to look inquisitively at the other Nui. "Oh! Hello there~ wait, that's odd… my doppelgangers aren't usually floating, or see-through for that matter"

The floating Nui looked down at her hands to see that they really are see-through, "This is weird, like really really weird."

The grand couturier placed her fingers on her chin seemingly in contemplation, "And you're a lot more talkative too…" She suddenly smiled with a realisation like a light bulb lit up in her mind, "Oh I know! Since you seem quite independent, I'll just call you clone Nui, and you can call me true Nui! A good way to separate us, right?"

Clone Nui seemed to become rather worriedly frustrated, "Are you not concerned at all with the fact that you CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD!?"

True Nui seemed to shrug this off "Oh relax Nui, it's not like I have the time to take this all in right now, this is meant to be a high intensity chase, plus doing a big talk down of all this would absolutely kill the pacing."

This response seemed to further frustrate clone Nui "What the hell are you talking about!?"

True Nui casually pointed in front of them "That!"

Seemingly in response, a nudist beach helicopter raised from below the side of the building, baring down on true Nui with a large spotlight. Clone Nui in the brief moment noticed she did not have a shadow, and so she considered the possibility of not physically existing in that reality for the time being. A panel slid open on the front of the helicopter causing a machine gun to extend out and train it is aim on true Nui. It began firing again what seemed to be needles, which true Nui evaded and continued skipping across rooftop to rooftop.

Ryūko and Satsuki did not move far from the alley way since Nui's escape. They were being guided by a nudist beach agent towards what appeared to be a pest control van parked close a few meters up on the other side of the street. As they approach the van, they

noticed a figure standing outside the door to the van who responds to their approach.

"Trouble just has a way of finding you doesn't it Matoi?" the voice was rough and filled with untargeted malice and as they grew closer they saw that the voice belonged to none other than Tsumugu.

He stood with a lit cigarette of course, wearing his classic dark green combat vest paired with his matching dark green khaki trousers, both of which bearing many black straps with metal buckles some of which holding thread spools like grenades. His face also the same with his black notch on his nose and red Mohawk, his eyes fierce making obvious his experience and his battle-hardened nature.

"It's been a while Tsumugu, you haven't changed one bit." Ryūko replied, her voice passively aggressive, yet not hostile in nature.

Tsumugu took a puff of his cigarette before responding in kind "Yeah well, retirements been kind, you did alright to keep those parasites within your body in-check." Before Ryūko had a chance to respond, Tsumugu pointed with his thumb to the door of the van, "They're waiting for you in there, get in quick, we don't have time to lose while that freak is still out there."

Ryūko and Satsuki slid open the door, revealing two nudist beach agents sitting in front of several monitors and radio equipment, they spoke into headsets connected to the radios via cables while the monitors show first person views of nudist beach agents piloting DTRs, while other monitors show feed from a helicopter's point of view watching Nui skipping across roof tops while the helicopter's machine gun bears down on her. Mikisugi stood behind the agents in full nudist beach gear, so not much clothes at all, a black belt wrapped around his waist bearing many compartments similarly coloured with a gun slot situated directly over his crotch area, he had a black band covering his neck, and black boots. Both the belt and the covering on his neck bared the nudist beach insignia, a pair of underwear surrounded by a red circle with a diagonal redline striking through the underwear connecting with the circle.

He greeted both Satsuki and Ryūko with a simple "Yo." However Mikisugi's greeting was ignored as they had no time for such pleasantries.

Satsuki was the first to respond, "What is the current situation?"

Mikisugi looked past the lack of greeting in recognition of the chaotic events, "We're dispatching as many agents as possible but she's just as tough as usual, any agents that manage to catch up with her get knocked on their ass, no fatalities as of yet since she seems to be in too much of a hurry."

Satsuki was cold and clinical about the situation in her reply, "And what is our strategy?"

Mikisugi responds in his usual casual demeanour, "The strat' is to chase her to the point we can back her into a corner, which will be possible with your help, once she's in that corner we'll try to take her in, and if that ain't possible, then either you two or Tsumugu will take her out."

Mikisugi proceeded to pick up two cases in the corner of the van, then passed them to both Ryūko and Satsuki, "These should help with that."

Inside Satsuki's case contained her duel wield long and short katana blades Bakuzan Kōryū and Bakuzan Gako, them looking the same as the day Satsuki last used them, with their white hilts and black blades that gleamed from whatever light that touched them.

As Satsuki pulled them out of the case Mikisugi commented, "I know you gave them to us thinking you would never need to wield them again, but I'm afraid now's about time for you to do so."

Satsuki nodded in agreement, "Yes it seems it is…"

Within Ryūko's case contained what appeared to be two large sized tailor's daggers. It's three blades on each hilt were coloured with red

edges on their sharp ends with their blunt ends being coloured black.

Mikisugi commented on Ryūko's removal of these weapons as well. "They're the tailor's blades, duel wield spec, and are specially designed for one such as yourself."

Ryūko looked at Mikisugi as he commented then looked back down at the weapons, "yeah these should work just fine."

One of the agents sitting in front of Mikisugi then spoke up to gain Mikisugi's attention, "Sir, the target has reached the designated zone."

Mikisugi then raised his voice in an order, "Alright! It's go time!" The van then started moving, quickly gaining speed with Tsumugu following close behind on his motorcycle.

The clash

Nui's skips seemed effortless, yet with each skip she leapt bounds across the many roofs in the city. The agents continued to attempt to capture her, firing many needles all of which she dodged seemingly just as effortlessly. Another helicopter flew in front of Nui's path, four agents dropping off from the side door.

"Don't you dare even think about moving!" One of the agents shouted at the irritated Nui.

"Sorry boys, but I haven't got time for dating! And anyway you're not really my type." Nui responded in kind.

The agents prepared to fire what seemed to be black coloured sewing machines factored into Famas style rifles. Nui prepared a weapon of her own, although an unconventional type, as the flesh of her hands seemed to peel off revealing pure black life fiber hands underneath, rainbow colours gleaming in the style of the life fiber hands she had used in her final acts. However instead of forming single blades, the fingers of her hands seemed to sharpen into individual blade-like claws. The agents began firing with Nui quickly dodging, dashing close towards the agents. She swiped with her claws knocking down the agents and breaking the rifles into pieces, the flesh seeming to reform on Nui's hands the claws shrinking to shape back into regular sized fingers. The agents laid on the ground preparing to get up, but with a single punch to each of their heads they were knocked out.

"Sorry again boys, I would play with you some more but as I said I'm in a hurry." Nui began running once again with the helicopter now turning around to likely deposit more agents while the other helicopter with the machine gun seemingly turned back.

All of a sudden Nui was engulfed in a cloud of white puffy smoke before beginning to run once again, as the helicopter began

following her with its spotlight, completely unaware that what it was chasing was one of Nui's doppelgangers from Nui's La Mon-Mignon Prêt-à-Porter while the real Nui had jumped down into an alley way from within the cloud of smoke.

Nui dusted herself off casually as she proceeded to walk down the alley way only for her to feel cold steel of three blades at her neck. "Oh my, Ryūko dear! it's been a while hasn't it? And I wasn't even able to detect your presence!"

Nui spoke knowing who it was then had quickly swung one of her claws at Ryūko, who deflected the attack with her blades, causing Nui to gracefully back-flip backwards gracefully out of the alleyway.

Her view was met with a great many nudist beach agents in a circle formation, suddenly illuminated by spotlights with Satsuki standing in the centre, "you aren't as cunning as you would like to think Nui, I'll be having your head."

Nui acted with disingenuous surprise as the two girls approached from both her front and behind, "Wow! Excellent trick you two! So, all that chasing was to back me into a corner? Very smart! And Satsuki! It's been far too long!"

Ryūko shouted from behind Nui as she approached wielding her tailor's blades, "Its over Nui! There's no getting out of this, just give up!" Her voice was full of malice, her words as sharp as the blades she held.

Nui was un-phased however, merely standing there casually. She pulled out her parasol from a puff of smoke carelessly slinging it over her shoulder, "awful weather we're having huh?" Her sudden remark confusing those that surrounded her, some of which looking up at the clear night sky as she continued, "Almost like it's raining dozens of me!"

Satsuki and Ryūko realized too late, as suddenly a bunch of Nui's doppelgangers fell from the sky. The impacts of their landings

knocking down the Nudist beach agents and leaving dents in the ground.

"I placed a bunch of un-activated clones on the roof before I dropped down, pretty neat huh!?" Nui explained cheerfully as both Ryūko and Satsuki approached her from opposite sides.

Ryūko ran with her blades at both sides and prepared to swing them both at Nui, reaching Nui first in her shorter distance. Nui blocked her attacks with a twirl causing Ryūko to go for another quick swing, Nui responds with her own attack swiping with her right claw. Ryūko blocked the attack, the impact forcing her body backwards, her feet grinding along the ground. Not long after Satsuki begins her own attack. She went for a dual slash of both sides; Nui span around her causing Satsuki to turn and go for another attack moving her blades in a stabbing motion. Nui this time blocked with her claws while jumping into the air flipping over Satsuki. Satsuki went for another charge, preparing to slash from both sides, Nui standing still as to mock Satsuki. As Satsuki reached Nui, Nui appeared to limbo under her strikes causing Satsuki to move past her, as Satsuki turned to face Nui, Nui appeared to flip once again, this time kicking Satsuki who blocked, and was pushed backwards on her feet in the same direction of Ryūko.

"Satsuki, you're a bit slower since last time we fought, and Ryūko gave in far too quick!" Nui spoke just as casual as usual, seemingly to mock the two girls "If you want me, you're gonna need to try harder than that! Or at least take me out to dinner first."

Tsumugu ran up flights of stairs one after another with a suitcase in hand. He made it quickly to the fourth floor of what seemed to be an office building, where he walked pasts various desks over to the window overlooking the street. He smashed the window open and released the seals on his case revealing various parts. He assembled the parts to form a sniper rifle which he perched on the ledge of the window, he then lied down and peered through the scope atop the rifle. His view was met with Satsuki and Ryūko attempting to fight Nui only to be blocked and end up in the direction

of the alley way. Behind Nui laid dozens of knocked out agents having been taken out by Nui's doppelgangers who subsequently disappeared after taking them down.

Mikisugi's voice chimes into Tsumugu's ear through his earpiece, "do you have a shot?" Mikisugi was standing in the van, looking into a monitor that showed the view of Tsumugu through a camera on his suit.

Tsumugu had his scope trained on Nui's head, his finger itching to pull the trigger, "yeah but knowing her she'll probably dodge it anyway."

Back in the van Mikisugi replied through the communications in acknowledgement, "Alright, hold your fire for now, reinforcements is on its way-"

Tsumugu suddenly interrupts, "Wait a minute somethings happening."

This causes a confused "huh?" from Mikisugi, as Tsumugu is met with the view of Nui suddenly collapsing onto one of her knees.

Nui's sudden collapse brings surprise to both Ryūko and Satsuki who was about to approach for another attack.

Nui appeared frustrated as she spoke through struggled breaths, "N-no… q-quiet! I-I'm in c-control!"

Vibrant crimson threads started to surface out of Nui's skin, spewing from her legs, arms, hands and even her face. The threads begin flowing out and circulating Nui like before, forming a whirlwind of red threads twisting around obscuring her into a figure enwrapped in the fibers. The threads dissipated revealing Nui standing there now wearing the school uniform, with her hair let down and wearing the Japanese style white eyepatch, it was clone Nui.

"Wait! Please wait, please hear me out!" Clone Nui shouted in her desperation.

However Satsuki responded, cold and demanding, "We aren't falling for your ridiculous tricks any longer Nui."

Nui sweated from her forehead, slinking back from this response, "I understand why it may seem that way, I remember it all now, well not really remember per say… its strange, it's like I watched a movie about my life, well my previous life, who I am, who I was…" tears dripped down from Nui's remaining eye, "Ryūko… I'm so sorry…"

Satsuki was about to shout again, as cold as before, however she felt a hand on her shoulder, as Ryūko spoke to her. "Wait, I don't know what the hell is going on but, I think there's something more than this than just another one of Nui's tricks."

Nui had just finished wiping away the tears when Ryūko shouted over to her, "Alright Nui, or whoever the hell you think you are!"

Nui interrupted with an audible irritated sigh permeating through her voice, "just call me clone Nui, the other ones true Nui…"

Ryūko replied in kind "Alright "clone Nui!" This is this your chance, you gotta make this make sense! You hear me!?"

Clone Nui nodded, her face reflective of the seriousness of the situation, "Alright… this is what happened."

The sky was full of stars on the night the battle for humanity took place. The victory was decided, and a girl fell from the sky to be caught by the ones she loved as she hit the ground. However their celebrations could not be heard where this event took place, atop Honnouji academy tower. Quietly one by one a few red threads fell upon the cold steel of the tower's peak. It was Shinra Koketsu's threads, they had latched onto Ryūko as she fell from the earth's atmosphere, the red fibers had clinged to her in a final desperate act to survive. More and more red threads gathered on the tower, the

threads shifting to form a figure crouched on their knees. The figure is Nui, she was completely nude, her hair draped around her and her cross shaped scar in place for an eye visible for all to see. She looked at her hands, her face absorbed in bewilderment. She then looked up at the sky, peering into the endless night. It took only a moment for Nui to realize what had happened, tears streamed from her eye, her face began twisting in anguish as she placed her hands against her face and quietly sobbed, her pain echoing into the whistling air. Suddenly she was met with the sight of a child, a little girl, her hair tied into large pigtail twirls and she wore a frilly pink dress. She ran up happily to much taller figure, their features obscured by shadow.

When the little girl reached the figure, she was met with the figure shouting at her, their voice was cruel and filled with malice, "You pathetic failure! You were supposed to be our greatest tool! You were supposed to be our everything! But you failed us!"

Nui grit her teeth, the flow of tears refusing to cease. However, she was met with another vision. This time it was a view of herself as old as she was at that moment, she wore a wedding dress, her veil raised over her head, she held her hands together in proper form. She stood atop a bell tower, a voice called out to her from below, but instead of jumping down to meet that voice, she turned away. After seeing this Nui wiped the tears from her face and she stood, her face now filled with determination. She quietly made her way down from the tower and as she walked away, a ghostly figure of the grand couturier stood still behind her still staring up at the stars. Nui moved carefully through the streets of honno-city. She wanted to go home, she did not know where that was, or how she would reach it, but her mind was filled with nothing but "I want to go home" the cold air like knives on her skin. Naked, alone but… Alive. She took a white t-shirt and a dark green pair of shorts off from a washing line and disappeared into the night.

"That is what happened…" Clone Nui said, to the utter shock from both Ryūko and Satsuki who continued to stand in front of the

alleyway. Clone Nui had recounted the events of her origin to them creating a moment of silence. "I had left behind my previous self, in a wish to leave the past behind, and so I… I…" Clone Nui broke the silence building up to a declaration, "I… I want to live a normal life!"

Nui's declaration causes another moment of silence.

A single "Huh?" is audible from Ryūko as the confusion in the air is palpable.

Nui continued shouting, her determination resounding in every word, "I don't want to hurt anyone, I just want to live a normal life! Even after everything that happened, I just wish to live, to go to school, to have friends, to fall in love, I just want to live a normal life!"

Her voice echoed as the silence continued permeating through the scene from all of the onlookers.

Nui continued, looking directly at Ryūko, "So you can try to cut me down, but even if I don't have any power or skills… I'll fight back all the same!"

Yet another moment of silence made its arrival, the tension overwhelming to all that witnessed it. The inevitable interruption came from several vehicles from the right side of the battlefield and the metal thud of footsteps from DTRs. It was not long before a much larger squad of nudist beach agents than before was gathered around the three in a large circular formation.

A single agent's voice rang out from the squad as they trained their rifles on the fearful Nui, "Hands up Nui there's no getting away!"

Nui tentatively followed the command, her body shuddering with fear as she knew they were just as ready to kill her on the spot as knocking her out and putting her on a dissection table. Her gaze was drawn to her left however as she noticed Ryūko walking diagonally towards the nudist beach agents and closer in front of Nui before stopping a few meters in front of her.

Ryūko began to shout at the agents, her words bringing surprise to all that heard them, "I still don't fully understand what's going on, but this Nui, is different from the last, and if she really does want a normal life, then if you want her, you're gonna have to go through me too!"

Nui was the most dumbstruck, only for her to see Satsuki walk forward as well, standing next to Ryūko, "I stand by my sister's decision, and I too will aid Nui!"

Clone Nui in her astonishment was close to tears, her words were feeble, emanating gratitude, "Ryūko… Satsuki…"

Tsumugu on the fifth floor of the adjacent building mixed his surprise with anger, as he spoke to Mikisugi through the communications, "what the hell are they doing?! I'm taking the shot!"

Mikisugi replied quickly with a, "No, wait!"

Tsumugu replied in return, channelling his frustration and rage, "What do you mean wait!?-"

Tsumugu was interrupted by another occurrence, in the street. Clone Nui collapsed onto her knee, the vibrant crimson threads wrapping and spinning around her again, the fibers then vanished to reveal true Nui standing amidst the battlefield that was once the street.

True Nui did not have her usual composure and she was not even looking at Ryūko, Satsuki or any of the Nudist beach agents. Her eye was clouded with rage and she did not even bare a smile, her mouth unveiling her shark-like teeth in a gaunt grim enraged frown.

She looked down at the floor, her words uttered out with rage, as she seemed to not address anyone visible, "I gave up that easily?! I can't have… I CAN'T HAVE."

Ryūko stepped forward calling out to the enraged Nui "Nui, no… true Nui."

Her words seemingly snapping true Nui out of her rage upon hearing them, changing back to her usual, chipper self, "oh hi Ryūko! Very sorry about all that."

Ryūko ignored the insincere apology, continuing from before, "That other you, Clone Nui, let her go and disappear from this world."

A simple command, and yet Nui acted confused. "Oh you mean that? Don't tell me you fell for that Ryūko."

Satsuki stepped forward as well to join her sister's side, "we can see through your tricks Nui, and that was not one of them."

Nui was quiet for a moment before shrugging, "ok ok, I give, that other me is a rather strange happening I didn't expect but if you think I'm gonna give up living for that pathetic thing, then you got another thing coming!"

Every gun was trained on Nui, with each having a finger itching to pull the trigger, but it was Satsuki's words that would be true to her aim more than any rifle, "Why are you still here Nui?"

These words struck true Nui with genuine confusion as she threw out a "huh?"

Satsuki continued her voice stoic and cold, "you have nothing left, so why do you continue to live? Your master's final command was to cast away your body, to begone from this world and yet you stand before us."

Nui's casual confusion changed to quiet enraged malevolence, she spoke under her breath with a simple "shut up…"

Satsuki again continued, "Your plans were for naught, humanity survived and life fibers perished, your values were ultimately meaningless, and yet you persist to hang onto life for what reason?"

Nui's anger deepened as she let out another "Shut up…" a touch louder from before, her malice arising from both words.

Satsuki persisted however as coldly as before, "And worst of all, you are standing here to remind me of your disgusting master, your putrid "mother" so she could torment me beyond the grave. But nevertheless she is gone, Nui Harime! The one you devoted everything to left you behind with nothing! You pathetic failure!"

These words were the last, as they seemed to shatter Nui's composure entirely. Nui suddenly began punching the ground repeatedly, the impact of her punches causing the ground to shake and a crater to form on the battle field, almost knocking over Satsuki and Ryūko, with the Nudist beach agent's all losing their balance and the shaking even being felt in the building Tsumugu resided within.

All the while Nui screamed "SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!" As she continued punching the ground even after her arms broke, where she would continue to fling her broken arms into the ground, eventually causing her arms to break apart into bloody pieces. She then stood there silently, her eye overcast and a Solemn frown on her face.

Ryūko and Satsuki cautiously stood up.

"You alright Sis?" Ryūko said checking on Satsuki calmly.

Satsuki replying to reassure her concerned sister, "yes I'm alright…"

Their gazes turned to Nui who continued to stand there quietly at the center of the massive impact crater. Her arms a bloody mess, she held in front of her. Tsumugu and mikisugi completed their own recoveries having been affected by the shaking caused by Nui's outburst. Mikisugi and his accompanying agents gathered themselves checking their equipment.

"Tsumugu? Come in Tsumugu!" Mikisugi spoke into the communications with an order.

Tsumugu took a moment to check his gear, his earpiece malfunctioning for a moment before coming back online, "yeah I'm here, god damn fibers…" He picked up his rifle peering down the scope, but his view of Nui was blocked by the crater's impression into the ground. "I haven't got a shot."

Mikisugi, replied as quickly as Tsumugu spoke, "Alright, you got permission to engage."

Tsumugu placed a grappling hook on the windowsill attaching the buckle to a strap on his suit then dropped out the window and made his way down the front of the building.

Meanwhile on the ground Nui appeared to quietly mumble to herself, "She's not gone… she's not… without her I… what am I?"

While Nui mumbled something strange caught the attention of Ryūko and Satsuki. The blood spewing from her wounds seemed to shift and slither. Blood began leaking from her eye and her mouth, causing Nui to shake seemingly in pain. The blood started to form a figure, a torso, arms and a head. The figure began to resemble the top half of clone Nui's body, while the bottom half being a swirling stream of blood that floated in the air. Her arms grabbed true Nui's head as if she were pulling herself out of True Nui's body.

"What the hell are you doing Nui!?" the clone Nui made of blood screamed at True Nui, who continued to shiver and shake in pain. "You really gonna let everything about you be controlled by that ghost!? She never cared about you! You were nothing but a tool to her! And I'm not gonna let you throw yourself away for a monster who treated you like GARBAGE!"

True Nui was unable to reply, only capable of letting out a choked gurgling sound.

"Fine then… If you can't see it! I'll force you too!" The blood clone Nui started to be enveloped in shining purple stars, before the stars began filling true Nui's body.

The stars became one large purple star that exploded into a black liquid filled with white stars, like the universe overflowing like water, The liquid quickly filled the impact crater.

"What the hell?!" Ryūko shouted in sudden surprise.

However she was left ignored as Satsuki was filled with recognition at the familiarity of the events, "This just like… the clash of the god robes…"

Before long, the two sisters were enveloped by the liquid.

Tsumugu arrived soon at the crater prepping his white needle gun, only for the liquid to suddenly burst out of the star quickly enveloping him as well, "God damn it not this shit!" The liquid began moulding and shifting, forming a semi-sphere covering the ground of the crater.

The five individuals found themselves in a void of white. Ryūko, Satsuki and Tsumugu looked around confused, while Nui stood there her eye blank and permanently in shock, her arms seemed to have reformed, the blood clone now fully formed into a figure of clone Nui standing besides true Nui while a trail of blood stemmed from her foot up to true Nui's leg.

"What's going on Nui?" Ryūko angrily questioned clone Nui.

But clone Nui continued looking intensely at true Nui, "you will see…"

The white void began to change into a square room, growing walls with a bed pressed up against the back. Pillows and toys began to appear in the room, both on the bed and on the ground all of various shades of pink and purple. The toys was then followed by a multitude of mannequins appearing in the room wearing different clothing such as dresses, shirts and other kinds of clothes all coloured as well with various shades of pink. Ryūko's Satsuki's and Tsumugu's faces showed the same confusion, when a little girl

appeared on the floor of the white room wearing a frilly pink dress and had two large pig tails. She seemed to be playing with two small dolls, prancing them about with her hands.

A large door at the front of the room slid open to reveal a large figure cloaked in black, "Nui…" the figure emanated a deep, dark voice. "Lady Ragyō has called for you, It's time for your lessons."

The young Nui stood up brushing down her dress as she eked out a "Oui." with her quiet, timid and high-pitched voice following the dark figure out of the room.

Suddenly the room shifted changing to a similarly sized room, a metal table stood in the middle with two seats, on one sat the young Nui and in the other, a ghost of the past, the one and only Ragyō Kiryūin, her white hair in the form of wings with the rainbow light emanating from the front, her dress being her usual attire of being fairly revealing white cloths going down her chest meeting at the bottom to attach to a similarly coloured white dress, and her cold cruel red eyes poised expectantly on the young Nui. The sight of her mother struck Satsuki, like a phantom she had buried haunting her from the grave.

Ragyō tapped her fingers on her elbow with her arms crossed as she sat across from the child Nui. Nui then raised up a piece of clothing she seemed to have been working on, only for Ragyō to take it from her hands.

Ragyō examined the piece of clothing seeming to be a small white dress, Ragyō's face then became twisted in anger, "This is pathetic Nui!" Ragyō threw the dress onto the table shouting at the little girl, "you have to be better than this! Do you understand the reason you were born?! You continue working sloppy like this and you are nothing but a failure!"

The child Nui looked distressed at her mother's anger, only replying with a subdued "Oui Maman…"

Ryūko looked closely at the child's face before the scene suddenly shifted again. This time the room became much larger, a large red mat covering the centre of the room, three windows was on the front wall overlooking the large room, through the window showed three shadowy figures, one In the centre window standing up while in the two windows to the sides showed their figures hunched over sitting in front of the window, half of their body concealed below the window. A figure faded into the room, another Nui, however she was no longer a child, being almost the same height as present Nui, but her dress was replaced with black skin tight exercise vest and matching exercise shorts, her hair was in a single pony tail, while her face bared a serious cold demeanour, Several patches could be seen on her skin connecting to a circuit on the back of her neck. This Nui walked onto the red mat causing a large double-sided door at the front of the chamber to open revealing two large imposing figures, they appeared to be hulking masses of creatures resembling suits that towered above Nui.

A voice chimes through the speakers at the top right and left corners of the room, "COVERS prototype combat test, begin."

As soon as the voice finished echoing through the room, the two creatures charged at Nui. Nui ran at them as well, flipping over the creature to the left then sweeping the legs of the creature to the right. She then wrapped her legs around the arm of the left creature while her arms were on the floor, digging her nails into the ground, attempting to grapple it, only for the creature to pick her up and slam her onto the floor. Nui then took her sharpened nails and attempted to cut both of them down as the right creature gets up off the ground. Nui cuts into the left managing to pull out crimson fibers from it's chest then snipping them with her nails causing the left creature to slump down onto the ground. The remaining creature punches Nui in the stomach, knocking the wind out of her, before wrapping it's arm around her neck attempting to choke her. Nui elbowed the creature furiously before biting into the creature's arm and with rage, ripping it off with her teeth. She then plunged her arm into the creature and

dragging out it's fibers before cutting them, making it slump down as well, defeated.

Another voice chimes through the speakers, "hm I see… your technique is sloppy Nui." It was Ragyō's voice, "you have to be better than this, you are to be the grand couturier after all, lest you be a failure… but never mind that, come to the bathing chambers, I will… purify you…"

Satsuki grit her teeth with disgust causing Ryūko to look at her sister with concern.

"Oui maman…" the young Nui replied, her voice cold and distraught.

Ragyō then said another remark "oh and Nui? Don't forget to smile."

With these final words the scene shifted again, becoming what appeared to be Ragyō's office, an endless expanse of ceiling and floor with a bright white light in place for walls. Ragyō sat in a seat in front of a white minimalist desk, and another familiar face, Rei Hōōmaru stood by, she wore her pure white suit and her green and orange sunglasses, with her light purple twirly hair in contrast to her brown skin. She stood calmly holding what appeared to be a fancy clipboard with several pieces of paper clipped on. Another Nui stood a few paces away, more akin to present day Nui, wearing her grand couturier attire and hair, this one also was missing an eye, but instead of an eye patch, she merely covered it with her hand while beneath seemed to leak out blood.

"So was the mission a success?" Ragyō questioned calmly.

Nui in turn gave a cheerful answer "yup! Isshin Matoi is suuuper dead! And I got his special weapon right here!" Nui held up her half of the rending scissors, the purple blade gleaming in the light connecting to its round hilt.

"Half of a giant pair of scissors?" Ragyō observed the blade curiously.

Nui replying with "yup! The old man called them the rending scissors; they have the capability to sever life fibers!"

Ragyō seemed amused by this finding "hmm, intriguing, that man always did have so many tricks up his sleeve, but wait, where is the other half?"

Ragyō's question, made Nui come out of her cheerful demeanour somewhat, "I… I left it behind…"

As soon as she said this Ragyō slammed her hands on the desk standing up. "you let that fool cut your eye AND left behind part of his greatest weapon?!"

Ragyō's shouting caused Nui to panic partially, trying to make an excuse "I-"

But she was quickly cut off by Ragyō "Save your excuses! While you completed the mission these faults are pathetic Nui, are you so desperate to disappoint me as a failure!?"

Nui was downtrodden by this, only being able to utter "désolé Maman…"

Ragyō settled down now asking another question more calmly "And why haven't you regenerated your eye?"

Nui responds, "Payment for my faults Maman…"

Ragyō smiled with arrogant satisfaction, "Hm I like that, but do cover up the scar, the sight is quite the…" Ragyō chuckles slightly before continuing "… Eye sore."

Nui can only utter "Oui maman…" before turning and walking away.

The scene then shifts to final sight a pitch black void with a single spot light illuminating the same Nui as before, her voice is course and jittery from crying while tears continued to stream down from her remaining eye, she was taking a needle to her face sewing a thread

through her purple eyepatch covering the cut where the eye once was, "You don't deserve to be the grand couturier! You don't deserve to live! You… you…" This Nui broke down as the stunned onlookers observed her closely as she continued, "… You failure…"

Suddenly, Tsumugu, Satsuki and Ryūko were gone, and the scene changed to a white void once again, with only True Nui and clone Nui facing one another.

Clone Nui was no longer made of blood or translucent for that matter grabbing the attention of true Nui. "Nui… I want to make a deal…"

Clone Nui proposal caught True Nui off guard. "What kind of deal?"

On the outside of the sphere stood many of the Nudist beach agents carefully observing, when they noticed the sphere suddenly disappearing into the ground, revealing, Tsumugu, Ryūko, Satsuki and true Nui to be standing where they were before the sphere had appeared.

Mikisugi had watched what transpired within the sphere through Tsumugu's camera which had continued to function. "Were those Nui's memories?"

Meanwhile back at the crater true Nui seemed to speak to herself for a moment "I guess I have no choice…" She then shouted seemingly into the sky, "To the naked apes watching! I would like to make a request!"

Surprise filled the air as back in the van Mikisugi said "a request?"

As if to reply, Nui built up her voice for a declaration, "I would like… To join Nudist beach!"

Dialogue with the inhumane

The shock refused to subside from Nui's sudden declaration.

"W-what?" Ryuko's confusion brimmed while Satsuki stood in stunned silence.

"The hell you mean join?!" The silence was fully broken now, by Tsumugu who had quickly approached from Nui's right and was now point his weapon at her, his face unveiling his aggression.

Nui cheerfully greeted Tsumugu in her usual playful demeanour, "Oh its Mohawk man!"

Tsumugu responded with his same malicious intent, "That's not my name bitch."

Nui recoiled in pretend offence "Alright Mohawk ape then, jeez."

Tsumugu ignored this bringing them back on topic. "Never mind that, answer the damn question."

He stared at Nui intensely, his finger on the trigger, while a Nui clone appeared to show up at his side attempting to poke him on the cheek, before he pulled up his other hand wielding another gun, shooting the clone.

Nui continued to be cheerful as she responded, "Isn't it obvious? I want to join your cute little organisation!"

Tsumugu closed his eyes in frustration, "No I got that part, but tell me why the hell you would want to do that? We represent everything your kind stands against!"

Satsuki chimed in before Nui answered, "He's right Nui, these whims of yours make less and less sense."

Nui looked troubled for a moment, twiddling a few strands of hair between her fingers. "Alright… this isn't easy to admit but… I'm kinda… exiled."

A collective "huh?" resounded from all those present in response to this, with Satsuki following the confusion with "Nui, explain."

Nui looked further troubled again, now scratching her head as everyone looked at her expectantly. Clone Nui appeared floating to true Nui's side as she continued to scratch her head in frustration, none of the others could see or hear Clone Nui, confirming to her she wasn't physically there, or noticeable to anyone but true Nui.

"Nui just tell them, its way too late to play dumb." Clone Nui crossed her arms looking annoyed at true Nui.

True Nui let out a long sigh "Ugh… Fine! I'll tell them." she finished scratching replying to the floating clone Nui, confusing her onlookers who saw her speak to the empty space beside her. "so… I was tasked with creating Shinra Kōketsu, it would act as the last effort for the conquering of this planet, but when that failed… I was blamed for it, the life fibers saw me as a failure…"

This answer filled Ryūko with further confusion, "But wait, at that point you were dead."

Nui replied to meet Ryūko's confusion, "well my physical body was gone, but my mind existed in the collective life fiber mind, essentially all life fibers have connections to one another, the larger the amount of life fibers the greater this connection! It was in these connections that my mind was preserved." Ryūko seemed to struggle with this idea while Satsuki seemed to simply nod in understanding.

Tsumugu intervened with another question, "Even if we were to believe all this bullshit, why the hell would we let you join after everything you've done?"

Nui's answer became increasingly aggressive as she spoke, "Well… after having killed myself, only to come back to life to see that you creatures killed the one person in this world I cared about and crushed all my HOPES AND DREAMS." She then returned to her casual demeanour as she finished "I would say we're about even."

Tsumugu replied calmly, although his words carried the same level of malevolence as before, "your hopes and dreams were to destroy humanity."

Nui retorted quickly in this back and forth. "Oh like you're any different, you would gladly genocide my species wouldn't you?"

This response caused Tsumugu to turn his head in frustration as Ryuko replied in his stead, "How the hell are we supposed to trust you to leave you alive?"

Suddenly the pest control van drove down the side of the crater pulling up in-front of the group. The door slid open to reveal Mikisugi standing at the entrance, who responded to Ryūko, "I can take care of that."

Everyone turned to Mikisugi who stepped out of the van.

Tsumugu closed in on Mikisugi, his words akin to a growl, "this is insane Aikuro!"

Mikisugi shrugged this off, moving past Tsumugu, "Relax, I know what I'm doing."

Tsumugu responded placing his hand on Mikisugi's shoulder, "do you?"

But Mikisugi merely patted Tsumugu's shoulder then walked away. He moved towards Nui, and in the quickest of motions, he placed what appeared to be a choker and Nui's neck. As soon as it touched her neck, it snapped into place closing around her.

Nui immediately went to fiddle with the choker, only for Mikisugi to interrupt, "Doooon't do that."

Nui pulled away her hands from the choker, as Mikisugi continued, "Its a kill switch, you fiddle with it, try to take it off, or its triggered remotely, then life fiber severing blades close into the middle and well… off with your head."

Nui seemed amused by this, "well, I hope it doesn't get itchy"

Ryūko questioned Mikisugi with suspicion, "wait, why do you have something like that?"

This question caused Mikisugi to nervously scratch his chin, "well… w-we had this in case well you… you went berserk… you know? Just a counter measure."

Ryūko looked angry for a moment, before nodding with understanding, "eh, I get it." Ryūko snapped back at Mikisugi "wait but how can this allow us to trust her? Just because she's at the threat of death doesn't mean she won't try to lash out."

Mikisugi threw his arm around Nui's shoulders, leaning on her, "This bad boy is designed, so she won't even get the chance to lash out." Nui flicked his hand off from her shoulder, causing Mikisugi to back off.

Satsuki raised her voice to take control of the scene, "All this is well and good, but we cannot go on without addressing what she has done."

The scene fell quiet. Nui stood with a somber smile on her face.

Satsuki stepped towards Nui, her voice bellowed across the scene, "The murder of Isshin Matoi and countless others… working to destroy humanity under the command of Ragyo Kiryūin, these crimes are heavy upon you Nui, you claim that you have been

through enough, but your very existence is an affront to our eyes… as I said before, I'll have your head."

The silence returned. Satsuki approached Nui, blades in hand.

True Nui merely stood there smiling, clone Nui appeared floating by her side, but true Nui merely waved her away with "Its alright…" true Nui then spoke directly to Satsuki, "Me and the well… other Nui, made a deal, that deal being that I'm gonna join her in living a normal life."

Satsuki threw out a malicious yet interested "Hm?"

Nui continued, "Despite all of this… I agreed, I even told her it would be better for her to just let me die, but she refused, I'm stuck with her it seems… now you can try to cut me down… But I will fight back, even if I will lose my head."

She finished with a twisted smile revealing her teeth.

Satsuki's gaze was filled with knives, however she looked away, sheathing her blades. "I see… very well."

Ryūko looked towards her sister, calling to her in confusion, "Satsuki?"

But her call was to no avail as Satsuki continued in response to Nui, "If that is your choice Nui, then for once… You have my respect."

Surprise filled the gazes of all the onlookers, even Nui, as Satsuki walked away. Suddenly a nudist beach helicopter lowered beside the group, blowing air through the scene, all of the group's clothing fluttered in the wind.

"We're taking you to nudist beach HQ Nui." Mikisugi raised his voice over the whirring of the helicopter blades.

Tsumugu looked on with disdain with his arms crossed, but he kept silent. Nui looked into Ryūko's eyes one last time, before stepping

through the sliding door of the helicopter which lifted from the crater and disappeared into the night.

Unfamiliar familiar

Clone Nui had awakened in an unfamiliar bed. The time the two Nuis spent at Nudist beach HQ was long with true Nui obviously falling asleep mid orientation, causing clone Nui to avidly jot down notes knowing true Nui is most likely going to ignore them. Nudist beach had her placed in a hotel a few miles from her old place. She was told to quit her job, and would no longer be staying in her old apartment with the fees for the hotel being covered by nudist beach. She had stayed up all night, and went to sleep at seven in the morning having been giving the all clear to skip school for that day by Nudist beach as well. She looked around the room before lying back down on the bed.

Her messy bed hair jostled around as she stared back up at the ceiling, a single thought filled her head, "I'm hungry…"

She got out of the bed unveiling her pyjamas; pink loose fabric hanging from her body, covering both her torso and her pyjama bottoms covering her lower half as well, the shirt being a pink button down with white fabric edges, both the bottom and the top being spotted with many cute-looking rabbit heads, each one smiling with several pointed teeth. Nui picked up her white eye patch placing it over her cross shaped scar in place for an eye, slipping the band over her head and over her right ear, tightening it around her head. Nui wondered across the hotel room, approaching the kitchen area. She opened as cupboard to find a large pan, placing said pan on the stove of the nearby oven. She opened another cupboard above the counter, locating a bottle of cooking oil pouring a thin layer of oil into pan. She then surveyed the inside of the top half of the close by fridge, pulling out a plastic packet of bacon, opening it up and laying two pieces onto the pan then turning on the stove. She stood there for a few moments flipping over the bacon pieces with a spatula.

Suddenly, true Nui appeared behind her, floating in the air, and partially see through, shouting "Hello there!"

Clone Nui jumped with surprise causing the bacon pieces to fly out of the pan, landing on her head.

"N-Nui?" Clone Nui carefully picked the pieces of bacon off from her head.

"In the flesh!" True Nui replied in affirmation cheerfully, seemingly posing in presentation to her other self. "Do you usually burn your face like that?"

Clone Nui was running the sink's tap and placing her head in the running water. "of course not, you just startled me as I didn't realise you were awake."

True Nui casually relaxed in the air, her hands behind her head and her elbows in an upward position, "Actually I just woke up"

Clone Nui turned back to the stove replying over the sizzling of the bacon, "How do you look so uniform when you just woke up?"

True Nui replied like she was giving a lecture, "Lady Ragyō taught me to always look my best even while I'm asleep!"

Clone Nui seemed out of the conversation her voice more akin sleep talk than any actual reply, "did she huh…"

This caused true Nui to close in on clone Nui placing her face quite close to Clone Nui's face who continued to not be dozing off. "Nui!" True Nui raised her voice next to clone Nui's face causing Clone Nui to jump again to a lesser extent, the bacon partially jumping up into the air revealing themselves to be partially burned.

"Oh crap!" Clone Nui panicked for a moment as she hurried to turn off the stove before letting out a exasperated sigh.

True Nui circled around Clone Nui, "Now, its about time we sort out our available assets."

This remark caused clone Nui to throw a look of confusion in the direction of true Nui, "what do you mean?"

True Nui acted like the answer to this question was obvious, "we need to know what all our powers and weapons are."

Clone Nui replied her voice unveiling her obliviousness, "oh right…"

Red threads suddenly appeared and surrounded clone Nui before disappearing revealing True Nui to now be standing physically within the hotel room.

Clone Nui soon appeared floating in the room next to true Nui.

"Do you see the room as well?" True Nui questioned her receiving a quick nod in response. "Hm I see… so that room must be the pocket reality…" True Nui speculates to herself, holding her chin with her right hand, and her right elbow with her left.

This leaves Clone Nui in confusion throwing out a quick "eh?"

That causing the other Nui to explain, "Its an inter-dimensional space created by the life fibers in your body, its where the other's body resides when one is taking up space in this reality."

Despite this explanation clone Nui continues to look rather confused, upon noticing this, true Nui attempts to simplify "Just think of it like… an invisible room where one Nui chills when the other Nui is in control." True Nui moved past this unveiling her life fiber claws, "It seems I can't materialise my usual choice of weapons like I could for my parasol and clothes, how peculiar… ah well these will have to do." She then turned to clone Nui throwing out a question, "oh by the way, how did my arms regenerate?"

Clone Nui seemed surprised to hear this, "What do you mean? Isn't that normal for you?"

True Nui seemed troubled by this in her reply, "well yes, but it requires me to will the fibers to reform, otherwise I wouldn't still have one eye."

After True Nui said this, clone Nui seemed lost in thought for a moment, "speaking of the eye… I wonder why I still only have one eye after reforming on honnouji academy…" These words resounded in her mind before returning to her conversation with true Nui, "Nui… what exactly are you?"

Clone Nui's question made true Nui think for a moment before answering, "I think… I'm the physical manifestation of the original Nui's memories, but never mind that, lets get down to business!"

Suddenly true Nui unveiled one of her life fiber claws on her right hand and cut into her left arm's wrist, causing blood to explode out like a geyser.

"WHAT THE HELL?!" Clone Nui worriedly shouted immediately after true Nui had cut into her arm.

True Nui seemed rather casual as the blood poured out of her arm, "huh, its not regenerating…"

Clone Nui continued worriedly looking about the room, "wait is that not really bad?!"

True Nui turned to clone Nui just as casual as before, "oh relax Nui, its not like it hurts, just kinda ticklish really."

Her attempts to calm clone Nui were to no avail as she replied as fearful as before, "But you're BLEEDING! And wait why did you do that anyway?!"

True Nui continued to be relaxed in her reply "well I wanted to test my regenerative capabilities."

Clone Nui started showing frustration in her reply "Then why didn't you just try regenerating your eye?!"

True Nui suddenly appeared rather embarrassed "well for one this eye patch is sewn into my face and well… I don't want to…"

The scene was quiet for a moment, the sound of true Nui's blood spilling out filling the room.

"Well… alright… but wait what the hell are we going to do!?" Clone Nui seemed sombre for a for a moment before returning to panicking.

True Nui shrugged, much to Clone Nui's frustration when suddenly clone Nui's face was filled with clarity as she came to an epiphany. "Wait I have an idea…"

Clone Nui disappears for a moment before returning with a bright crimson thread in hand threading it through a needle. She began seemingly sewing into true Nui's skin starting at the beginning point of where the wound was, happily surprised that her idea seemed to be working, she finished sewing across the wound, snipping the loose end with a pair of scissors. Suddenly the wound began to close, the spilling of blood drying up as her arm reformed.

True Nui's face was filled with what seemed like genuine astonishment. Clone Nui reflected this as she couldn't even believe what she did. "Whoa! now how did you do that?!"

True Nui question caused clone Nui to ponder on what happened, "well you said that you had to will the life fibers in your body to heal… so I thought that maybe because I'm the original Nui body, then maybe I could will your life fibers for you, I guess because I saw the memories of your using life fibers to sew, that it took the form of me sewing."

True Nui looked somewhat troubled by this in her reply, "Huh… interesting, you seem to be smarter than you look… this could be

irritating though, that I gotta rely on you to heal… ah well."

Clone Nui shot a look of concern at true Nui "you're taking everything rather well."

True Nui seemed to fiddle with her nails pulling out a nail filer and grinding it against her nails, "So have you to be fair… I still don't really understand you."

Clone Nui mixed her look of concern with curiosity, remarking at true Nui's sudden declaration "Huh?"

True Nui continued filing her nails casually. "You very well could have gotten us killed, but despite you having every reason to let me die, you stuck your neck out so I could live, why?"

Clone Nui fell silent after true Nui said this, her eyes over shadowed before replying quietly, her emotions seeping through her words, "I just can't let you go… I just can't…"

True Nui was quiet for a moment before hand waving it away with a simple "hmm I see… well you can take control now, This hotel room is too airy for my tastes."

Clone Nui disappeared as red fibers surrounded true Nui and disappearing to show clone Nui in her place. Clone Nui sat silently, her teeth gritted, her face overcome with anguish.

Unexpected reunion

The red threads twisted and turned shifting around her, the energy pulsing through sent shivers down her spine as words began to emanate through them; "What a disappointment, to think an aspect of her still lives… You must feel the same, don't you? Ryūko ."

Ryūko awakened next to the snoring Mako, wearing her yellow rabbit polka-dot pyjamas. She rubbed her eyes calmly before looking down with a soft smile at Mako who continued to sleep in her own pyjamas bearing Mt Fuji and an eggplant.

"Jeez… after that night I guess the weird dreams are to be expected…" Ryūko proceeded to nudge Mako to get her to wake up, "Hey Mako… we're gonna be late to school."

Mako tossed and turned in her sleep mumbling "ugggghhh I don't wannaaaa…"

Ryūko had a bemused smile and made another attempt, "You know Satsukis gonna be here soon right?"

Mako immediately shot up to sitting position, "I'm up!"

This caused Ryuko to reply with another warm smile "welcome back."

Ryūko and Mako proceeded to get dressed into their school uniforms, Ryūko took a short sigh before kicking the doorway to the room, causing two voices to yelp from the kick. When they finished getting dressed the door slid upon as Mako's mother waltzed into the room, she had her pink dress on along with her frilly apron, she smiled brightly with her hair done up in a bun. Mako's brother and her father could be seen slinking around the corner down the hall.

"Morning sleepy heads! I made plenty of croquettes for you two for the day ahead!" Mako's mother's voice had a lively flourish as she

held a large cooking bowl filled with various croquettes while in the other hand she held a spatula.

Ryūko bared another bright smile "thanks misses M"

Mako's mum sifted through the croquettes with her spatula as she replied, "oh right! You said Satsuki would be here soon?" Seemingly in response there was a knock at the door. "Oh speak of the devil!"

Mako's mother answered the door revealing Satsuki standing there calmly in her own school uniform. "Hello Mrs Mankanshoku."

Mako's mother seemed to have a desire to impress Satsuki, "Good morning lady Satsuki! Would you like a croquette? I got plenty for everyone!"

Satsuki replied with a slight blush, "well I guess I could have one…"

But before Satsuki had a chance to receive a croquette, Mako and Ryūko approached after having put on their shoes and picked up their school bags.

Satsuki replied upon seeing their approach with a soft smile, "I see Mako is awake this time."

Ryuko replied with a slight chuckle, "heh, yeah."

As Satsuki received her croquette The three girls proceeded to leave and head to school as Mako's family waved and yelled to them in goodbye.

It was another cool morning, the crisp cold air nipping at the girls skin. They joined the crowds of students, Mako surprisingly quiet causing Ryūko to look at her with concern.

Mako spoke up, bringing her to the attention of both Satsuki and Ryūko, "will… Nui be coming back to school?"

The group stopped as a level of surprise filled the air. "E-er yeah… But not today though…" Ryūko replied quietly.

This caused a light fill Mako's eyes "really?"

Ryūko seemed confused towards her in response, "I still don't know why you care about her, Mako."

In return Mako seemed to pout in frustration, "She just seemed lonely… I remember when I felt like that…"

Ryūko grit her teeth reflecting her own frustration. "maybe… But Nui deserves to be alone… I've done her enough favours…"

Mako and Satsuki shot their own looks of concern at Ryūko, who continued to walk on her own towards school. They arrived at their school, many students shooting looks towards them and whispering gossip among themselves, Satsuki keeping a vigilant eye at those that seemed to observe them. This culminated in the classroom as they entered drawing to them the attention of the class with many of their classmates whispering their own varying levels of gossip.

Ryūko spoke under her breath to Satsuki, like a spy trying to carefully communicate with her fellow agent, "Do you think they know about what happened?"

Satsuki replied just as carefully, "Its possible that word has gotten around…"

The three girls sat at their desks, while not long after their homeroom teacher entered through the door at the front. The students stood up and bowed following the command of the same student at the front as before, signifying the beginning of their school day.

Their classes was Uneventful, with lesson after lesson passing over and even lunch time being rather quiet as many of the students around them seemed to subtly avoid speaking to the group. Ryūko took multiple short looks of disdain towards Nui's empty desk as

multiple of the lessons passed her by. It didn't feel like much had happened at all to the three girls when the bell had rang announcing the end of the school day along with the teacher telling the class that they were "dismissed".

The students proceeded in getting up from their desks, Satsuki looked towards her sister and Mako before speaking up to get their attention, "Ryūko, Mako would you like to come over to my house for this afternoon for a spot of tea?"

Ryūko's and Mako's eyes brightened up, as Ryuko responded happily "for real?"

Satsuki replied with a warm smile "of course, in fact Soroi recently did an excellent job on the cleaning."

Ryuko fist bumped the air "sweet!"

While Mako threw her arms up happily shouting, "Yaaaaay!"

The Three girls cheerfully made their way out of the class and then out of the school. They passed through streets and across roads before arriving at a comfy two story house on a quiet street.

"You know its still hard to believe that the heir to the Kiryuin estate lives here." Ryūko spoke casually with a bright smile.

"Well yes, that's rather the point, I spent my childhood living in mansions, I've had my fill of such large empty spaces surrounded by fumbling servants, when I only ever needed one butler." Satsuki said as the front door to the house opened to reveal Soroi.

"Ah, welcome home lady Satsuki." Soroi seemed to not have changed a day since his days at Honnouji academy, working under Satsuki, a loyal man beyond the Kiryūin family, serving Satsuki entirely.

He wore his usual attire of formal black trousers and black jacket over a white shirt and black bow tie, his eyes shadowed over and his mostly gone grey hair clean against his partially bald head.

"Thank you Soroi." Satsuki spoke warmly as the three girls made their way into the house after taking their shoes off at the entrance.

It wasn't long before the three girls were sat in a serene dining room, in front of a shining center-stage dining table. Every surface in the room was beautifully clean, reflecting the glow of every light that touched them. Soroi quietly came into the room holding a silver tray, placing china tea cups on small saucers in front of each of the girls, each tea cup white with dark blue images painted into the china depicting long bodied Japanese dragons and men wielding katanas. He then calmly took a similarly styled china teapot and calmly and gentility poured tea into each of the cups.

Satsuki responded to Soroi as he stepped away from Satsuki's cup "Looks as perfect as usual, thank you" with Ryūko and Mako responding similarly in response to Soroi filling their cups.

Ryūko saying, "Thanks."

Mako saying "Thank you!" Both of them cheerfully.

Soroi left the room while Satsuki stirred her tea with a silver spoon, Mako put in several cubes of sugar while Ryūko took a little sip, burning her tongue then taking another sip.

Ryūko lets out a short sigh, "to think that we would have a day like this after a night like that…"

Satsuki took an elegant sip of her own tea then replied in affirmation, "indeed…"

Ryūko smiled slyly, "Tsumugu must be pissed that he has to now work with Nui Harime of all people."

Satsuki had her own smile, "You realise he would probably be saying the same about you having to go to school with her right?"

Ryūko continued her own part in this back and forth with relaxed antagonism, "ugh… don't remind me…"

Satsuki frowned a little, "I followed you in your decision but I'm honestly still not entirely sure why you made that choice…"

Ryūko had another sigh, "I could say the same thing about you with true Nui, anyway lets talk about something else… like where's Rei? I was looking forward to saying hello to her."

Satsuki took another sip of her tea calmly before responding, "oh Rei? Soroi told me she went to doing some shopping not too long before we arrived."

A figure could be seen walking down a street in the low sun of the afternoon. They began to approach a convenience store. The figure was Rei, not much of her appearance has changed except for her style which has shifted from her usual attire of a pure white suit to a blue and white striped suit with a with a fittingly blue and white striped tie and a pair of blue lens-ed sunglasses. She stepped into the store, taking a basket from a nearby rack. She then went from isle to isle picking out various items, from butter, rice, melon bread, flour, lettuce, eggplants and various other items. She approached a carton of orange juice, placing her hand on the carton to take it, only for another hand to come into view on the carton from her left. Rei turned to see none other than clone Nui, who appeared to be wearing a purple coat and a darker purple skirt.

Rei was frozen in place as clone Nui appeared to be short of breath due to the surprise as she tried to eke out a response, "o-oh Rei!"

Rei stood there silently her face almost blank but unveiling the slightest notion of surprise as Nui continued, "I didn't expect to see you here, I noticed I needed a few things so I asked the agents if I

could do a bit of shopping…" Nui's attention was quickly grabbed my Rei's silence, "Rei?"

Rei answered, her words were bereft of emotion, "Satsuki told me about you last night…"

Clone Nui seemed rather nervous, "I… I see…"

Rei continued in response, "you are clone Nui, right?" Nui nodded as Rei then continued to question, "Can the other Nui see this?" Again Nui nodded. Rei closed her eyes seemingly in reprieve, "good… its… good to see you again, Miss grand couturier."

True Nui floated next to clone Nui looking at Rei in confusion as Rei took a carton of orange juice then turned around and walked towards the check out section of the store.

Clone Nui also looked confused as true Nui threw out a remark, "huh, that's odd, that wasn't like little Hōōmaru at all…"

Clone Nui replied, "I guess people can change a lot within a year."

Rei payed for the groceries, placing the items in multiple plastic bags, before carrying them towards the exit of the store. As she left she nodded to what seemed to be a nearby customer knowing they were actually a nudist beach agent tailing Nui.

As Rei made her way home her head was flooded with thoughts, "She really is back…" She stops for a moment, looking down at the ground in contemplation, "This might be my chance… To make things right."

She then began walking again, as the sun began to set.

A stir rears it's head

Wind rustled across the barren sandy plains, as several cars kicked up sand blown onto a hot tarmac road. A large camp made up of camo-khaki material in a similar colour to the sand could be seen by the road, several men and women made their way from propped up tent to tent, most were dressed in full military gear including helmets, military vests and full khaki uniforms coloured similarly to the tents, while others were dressed in lab coats and suits. Those dressed as soldiers carried rifles while the others carried various tools and other technology. A single man stood outside the camp, looking significantly different from the others, he was dressed in a much more formal military outfit, wearing a dark green jacket that bared several medals and badges and a similarly coloured military hat that would be worn by high ranking officers. He smoked a cigar as he seemed to watch as the vehicles in the distance approached, his eyes were fierce yet calm, a stretch of buzz cut black hair could be seen partially down the back of his head reaching out from underneath his hat. The Vehicles pulled up showing themselves to be black military-esque trucks with the nudist beach insignia painted on their side doors. The man dropped his cigar onto the ground and stamped on it as the car doors opened and the individuals stepped out.

Mikisugi stepped out of the front vehicle wearing his nudist beach gear and slicking his hair back as he spoke out to the man, "How the hell do you guys handle the heat? General er…"

The man spoke back with a relaxed smile, "You get used to it, and its general Steele. Welcome to death valley, sir Mikisugi."

Mikisugi approached the general, and the two shook hands as in the background several nudist beach agents exited the trucks pulling out various equipment and moving towards the tents.

"Its good to be here, I'm still surprised that it would be a general greeting us on our international debut." Mikisugi had a slight chuckle in his voice.

The general replied matching his level of casual enthusiasm, "Its the least we can do to welcome Nudist beach to our wonderful country, you guys made quite the names for yourselves you know."

Mikisugi gestured casually in amusement, "well thanks, but since we're on American soil now, could you tell us why we're here?"

The general turned and pointed towards the tents with his flat hand, "Of course, follow me."

Before the two had the chance to move towards the tent, a motor bike pulled up besides the trucks and the one who stepped off the bike was Tsumugu.

Mikisugi looked towards him with a sly smile, "Ah there you are, thought we would have to wait all day."

Tsumugu didn't respond as he simply moved towards them as Mikisugi spoke to the general, "general Steele, this is Tsumugu, he's a specialist of ours who is experienced in life fiber combat."

The general replied with "Ah I see, nice to meet you Mr Tsumugu."

He then stuck his hand out to shake Tsumugu's hand.

However Tsumugu ignored this and instead stuck a cigarette in his mouth then pulling out a lighter and setting the end aflame before speaking to Mikisugi, "This better not be a waste of my time Aikuro."

Mikisugi turns his head to the general awkwardly with an embarrassed expression on his face, "er don't worry about him, he's… not the sociable type."

The general closed his eyes and nodded with calm understanding, "ah, Don't worry about it, I know plenty of guys like him."

The three men made their way over to the tents, stepping into one at the front with two guards standing at the entrance who opened up the tent for them holding the entrance open. The tent was large with several individuals sitting in front of metal fold-able tables looking into laptops, monitors and microscopes. The general gestured to a specific laptop causing Mikisugi to begin looking to the laptop's monitor. Tsumugu stood in the background as a woman wearing a lab coat held an ash tray in front of him as he begrudgingly snubbed out his cigarette and then the woman in the lab coat returned to her research.

The general spoke as Mikisugi peered into the laptop, "Twenty four hours ago, several radios and our satellite transmission equipment picked up a strange signal that seemed to be bouncing from location to location from around the globe."

The monitor displayed a reading of this signal in the form of a line that spiked and fluctuated in height that represented the frequency of said signal.

Mikisugi then questioned the general professionally, "and you haven't been able to trace it to it's source?"

The general nodded, "yeah, due to it bouncing from location to location we can't locate where its coming from, however…"

The general tapped a few keys on the laptop's keyboard, which showed on the monitor another feed revealing a different line that spiked and shifted much more dramatically.

The general continued, "we noticed another signal that we could trace to death valley, one of the places the previous signal bounced from."

The general tapped different keys on the keyboard this time showing a very different feed, "we started surveying the area, checking on any local population in the area we started hearing odd stories, something of a beast eating people. We then investigated the area

but couldn't find anything so we started using satellite imagery and well… observe."

The monitor showed several images taken from top down view, satellite images in a grid format that the monitor proceeded to scroll through. They revealed a small image of what seemed to be creature of some sort, completely crimson that crawled along the ground. It was life fibers.

Both Mikisugi and Tsumugu were blown away by the shock as they stood stunned staring into the images of the strange entity. Its body seemed to stretch out as crimson tentacles extended from it's body.

"We checked on missing person's reports, but its been difficult to determine which of them was from regular means or by this… creature of ours." the general uttered, his seriousness in relation to the situation displaying across his face.

Mikisugi's face seemed deep in contemplation. "Well this is certainly worth my time"

Tsumugu uncrossed his arms and placed his hands on his hip.

As Mikisugi next spoke, his look of contemplation turned to confusion, "this doesn't make sense… the life fibers were supposed to die off after the primordial life fiber was destroyed-"

Tsumugu spoke up interrupting, "You say that like little miss weird bitch didn't show up on our doorstep."

Mikisugi replied turning to Tsumugu, "That's an exception to the rule."

Tsumugu retorted, "well maybe she's the reason this creature is still alive."

Suddenly a voice interrupts "NOT POSSIBLE"

The group turns to see no one, then they looked down and see a short prideful man with long red hair, he wore glasses that hanged underneath his eyes and he had a large stout nose. He wore a white lab coat over a shirt and tie with a sweaty sweater vest.

The general spoke in accordance to the man's approach, the general seeming to have this time his own embarrassment, "oh you came… Well Mikisugi, allow me to introduce doctor Xavier Natrium."

Mikisugi spoke directly to Xavier, "well its nice to meet you doctor."

The Doctor replied with, "I'm sure it is." Raising an eyebrow on Mikisugi.

Xavier made his way towards the laptop as he next spoke, "what you were speaking about, is simply not possible. A single individual worth of life fibers couldn't sustain the existence through signals alone!"

The general spoke to Mikisugi as Xavier inspected the images via the laptop. "He's one of our head scientists on life fiber research, writing his thesis on life fiber communication, he's one of the more… eccentric lot."

His last remark causing the doctor to throw out a dismissive "Hm" under his breath.

"He told me he wasn't even gonna come despite this being the find of the century-"

Xavier raised his voice to interrupt the general, "I wasn't going to come because THEY are here." Mikisugi and Tsumugu looked towards Xavier who continued to rant, "Those fools destroyed the primordial life fiber without getting a SINGLE specimen for research!"

Tsumugu turned to anger, while Mikisugi turned to annoyance.

"The hell are you talking about!?" Tsumugu shouted.

Mikisugi spoke more calmly compared to Tsumugu, "You realise that the primordial life fiber was going to destroy this planet right?"

Xavier seemed irritated at this obvious remark, "of course I do, and while I agree that the destruction of the primordial fiber was necessary, the fact that you destroyed it not getting anything from us to learn from! you set back the field of life fiber research by decades!"

Tsumugu was ready to square up with the doctor, but Mikisugi stopped him.

Mikisugi replied with an exasperated sigh, "look we can agree to disagree there, you want to elaborate on what you meant?"

Xavier showed a level of frustration in needing to explain this, causing Mikisugi to roll his eyes at the demeaning offset, "Life fibers exert a certain amount of control over other life fibers, this is how individual entities of life fibers exist, by a single dominant mind having control over a collective of life fibers, like a kamui having their own mind is a single fiber being control over the other fibers. That is also what the primordial fiber was, but instead of being in control of a single entity, it was in control of EVERY life fiber that originated from it, which meant every life fiber that existed on this planet. Now for a fiber to have control over other fibers, they need a certain amount of energy and to have this energy requires a certain mass of life fibers, even if their life fibers are powerful, they would still need a lot of those powerful fibers to control life fibers external to their mass."

Mikisugi commented further irritating the doctor, "Nice lecture but do you mind getting to the point?"

The doctor seethed as he replied "the *point* is that this individual simply can't have the energy on their own to control external life fibers, from that far away at least. Even Shinra-Kōketsu contained an incredible amount of powerful life fibers, was designed specifically for the purpose of controlling life fibers and required even more to be able to control life fibers on a world wide scale."

Mikisugi gestured casually "so what you're saying that she simply ain't powerful enough to be doing this. Oh by the way, how did you even research life fibers much with the primordial life fiber destroyed?"

Xavier rolled his own eyes, "Oh please, I've been studying life fibers for years, they weren't that much of a closely guarded secret that they were only known about in Japan, I even considered joining REVOCS since they seemed to know the most about them, although it was simple to change my mind when they started their attempt at destroying the world."

Mikisugi nodded in agreement as the doctor continued, "Anyway enough chit chat, this signal that is bouncing from place to place is communicating with this life fiber entity, my job will be to translate it, your job you nudist fools will be to do what you do best."

Tsumugu stepped forward, "You want us to hunt these life fibers."

Xavier then bared a wicked smile, "Exactly."

Thread hunt in the desert

The thud of Soldiers marching was audible as they approached the Nudist beach trucks and lining up in rows.

Mikisugi stood by the trucks shouting commands to the nearby soldiers, "Now! Life fibers ain't your average run of the mill targets."

This announcement provoking a few chuckles from some of the soldiers as Mikisugi continued, "Although you probably know that given they're aliens, and so you gotta use the right tools for the job."

A DTR piloted by a Nudist beach agent approached Mikisugi, drawing the attention of the soldiers as it's tracks rumbled across the ground.

Mikisugi announced as it entered "This, is a DTR, one of our specialised mechanised units specially built to fight life fibers."

His announcement causing an inquisitive soldier to raise their hand, "What does DTR stand for sir?"

Mikisugi seemed embarrassed at this question, "we… we don't talk about that." But his answer only served to confuse the soldier.

seemingly attached to the side of the DTR was a cuboid shaped box, painted black of course and bared the Nudist beach insignia on it's front which displayed at the side of the DTR. The DTR turned to the soldiers before a robotic arm extended from the top, the arm then grabbed the crate before placing it beside Mikisugi.

"And these will be what you will be using." Mikisugi placed his hand on the Nudist beach logo, the insignia seemed to glow for a moment.

A robotic female voice emanated from the crate, "NUDIST BEACH AUTHENTICATION VERIFIED."

Two panels atop the crate then slid open from the front and back separating from one another from on top the box, the two panels then laid flat on the back and front of the box as another panel from inside the crate extended out from the box before stopping above the back of the box displaying diagonally for all to see. On the panel above the box laid one of the black FAMAS style sewing machine rifles.

Mikisugi picked up the rifle holding it up by it's handle. "This is a standard issue Nudist needle rifle."

Mikisugi then placed his hand at the for-end of the rifle as he placed the stock against his armpit just below his shoulder, pointing the rifle to the side as he stared down the sights, his finger off the trigger to maintain trigger discipline.

He turned his head to the soldiers as he now pointed the rifle at the ground, "As the name suggests it fires needles, that may seem unconventional, however where normal ammo fails, plant enough of these bad boys in the target and their life fibers will freeze up like a shitty Christmas dinner."

It wasn't long after this that the soldiers had now lined up in front of the crate and each of them taking one rifle, while nudist beach agents who had joined Mikisugi handed out a multitude of mags to each soldier. The soldiers then lined up in rows again before checking their weapons such as the sights, safety function, reload time etc.

After Mikisugi had finished lecturing the soldiers on the proper use of the rifles, the general approached Mikisugi to grab his attention. "Sir Mikisugi I'm afraid we need to discuss who will be keep hold of the specimen."

Mikisugi sighed in his reply, "I knew it would come to that eventually, but shouldn't we wait till we actually got the specimen?"

The general scratched his head awkwardly as the short doctor stood next to him, smiling smugly, "I agree, but the good doctor here insists that we sort this out now…"

Mikisugi looked irritated at the doctor before looking back at the general "I see…"

There was a moment of silence as tension filled the air.

Suddenly, the general saluted towards Mikisugi, "Sir, on the behalf of the united states government we propose turning over the specimen upon capture to nudist beach."

An audible "what!?" jumped out of the doctors mouth as he turned from smugness to utter surprise.

Mikisugi stood taken aback, his shock filling his face, "Are you sure about that sir? isn't this a massive asset on the line?"

The general replied calmly with a smile on his face, "I already cleared it with the president, Nudist beach Is a force for humanity, not for a single nation, and if this entity is the fore-barer for a greater threat, I can think of no one who has more knowledge and experience with such a threat than Nudist beach."

Mikisugi's surprised turned to modest joy in his response, "well that's a great honour sir, flying that thing out of the country is gonna be quite troublesome though."

The general waved his hand out to gesture a negative response, "Now now, I said we would be turning other the specimen, not that it would leave the country."

Mikisugi's face turned to surprise once again, "oh, then how do you want to handle this?"

The general again smiled as he replied, "I have another proposal; an American Nudist beach branch that cooperates directly with the

American government."

Mikisugi's look of surprise refused to fade, "you're serious?"

Mikisugi's question caused the general to answer with genuine friendliness, "of course, if you require more agents I can draw up a list of worthy candidates, or perhaps even the agents from this mission. The president agreed that if another life fiber threat appeared in our great nation we want the best men on the job to ensure the safety of America."

Mikisugi tried to respond but the words couldn't come out in his shock as the general continued to talk, "We would provide you what ever you need to set everything up and you will be able to communicate between your branch in Japan and here in America whenever you wish, our conditions is that nudist beach cooperates fully with our government and our scientists will continue to have access to the specimen, for purely research purposes only."

Upon the last remark of the general the doctor looked significantly less frustrated and merely held his chin as he pondered on the agreement.

The general held his hand out to shake Mikisugi's as he states one last proclamation oh his proposal, "So, what do you say?"

Mikisugi looked deep in contemplation for a moment before clasping his hand in the generals and shaking it, proclaiming, "Its a deal."

The general smiled with relief, "great! Oh by the way… I heard you are going on this mission personally?"

Mikisugi nodded proudly, " Yup, I always see through a mission myself."

The general chuckled slightly, "Heh I like that, beats the hell out of a desk job, I practically had to beg the others back at the pentagon to let me come out here personally."

The two shared a proper laugh before Mikisugi stepped his way towards one of the trucks to see Tsumugu sitting on his bike by the truck smoking a cigarette, "so we're working with the Americans permanently now?"

But Mikisugi ignored this as he knew that Tsumugu already had his answer as he stepped into the passenger side door to the front of the truck before shouting to the other trucks, "Alright boys and girls, lets go catch ourselves a monster! Nudist beach roll out!"

As he said this Tsumugu and the Nudist beach trucks began driving as several military trucks followed them.

The many vehicle's tires rumbled across the sandy plains while DTRs sped beside them kicking up dust as they made their away through the desert. A soldier sat within a machine gun turret on one of the military vehicles, she peered through a pair binoculars as she clutched the handle of her needle rifle. She squinted for a moment trying not to catch the ray of the sun within her view before noticing strange markings on a hill to their west.

"Possible signs of target 8 o'clock!" The soldier shouted causing the soldiers in the front seats relaying the directions to the other trucks.

Upon hearing the directions Mikisugi in his truck spoke into his radio, "hey Doctor Natrium, does our current position correspond to the origin of the return signal?"

The doctor back in the camp peered into a continuous feed of a radio spectrum on a laptop, he then tapped a few keys before the screen changed to a map of the area with a pinging signal represented by a growing circle displayed on part of the map with a dot to represent the convoy, "Not quite, but you're on the right track."

The trucks continued driving across the desert when suddenly the front truck screeched to a halt, the trucks behind almost crashing into one another.

Mikisugi quickly spoke into the radio, "Front truck, report"

The agents in the front truck replied through their own radio, "Er sir, we've run into two people wearing weird white hazmat suits."

The two people in the hazmat suits clutched onto each other shaking where they stood at the sudden arrival of the vehicles. Back in the camp the Doctor sweated profusely after hearing this over the radio.

The general approached him, looming over the intimidated professor, "Xavier…"

The doctor almost jumped at hearing these words, "Er… y-yes g-general Steele?" He stuttered in fear comically.

The general continued his words cold and foreboding "Aren't those your men?"

The doctor gave no reply in his fear.

Back with the convoy the one of the agents got out of the vehicle pointing his needle rifle at the two individuals "hands in the air now!"

One of the people in the hazmat suit stuck their hands up still shaking where they stood, "Don't shoot! I'm with the government!"

Mikisugi stepped out two trucks behind, walking up to the front, "yeah they're friendlies…"

The agent lowered his weapon, as Mikisugi approached the two hazmat wearing individuals. "What are you guys doing here?"

The person he faced seem to emanate a man's voice, "T-that's classified!"

Mikisugi seemed fed up immediately after they said this.

He then turned to one of the agents, "… Alright shoot them."

Both the hazmat individuals managed to throw out a "wait what?" before the agent fired a few needles into both of them.

The two people's bodies went stiff, and fell onto the ground in the same position before they were shot with the needles.

Mikisugi started walking back towards the trucks ordering a few other agents got out of the trucks, "Alright put them in the back."

One of the agents pointed at a two person sized buggy parked near by as they dragged the people towards the trucks, "what do we do with that?"

Mikisugi shrugged, "Eh just leave it, I'm sure we can write it off on the good doctor's pay check."

Mikisugi got back into the truck, to hear the general's voice chime through the radio, "Seems our Doctor here forgot to tell us that he sent out groups of his personal assistants to attempt to do his own capture plan."

Mikisugi soon replied, "How many are we looking for?"

The general turned to the doctor who eked out a nervous "T-ten"

Mikisugi scoffed in frustration before replying, "Well we better find them before they are successful in their own hunt, if they haven't been already…"

The trucks continued driving while back in the camp the general mutes the mic on the radio before turning to doctor Xavier, "What the hell were you thinking?!"

The Doctor grit his teeth in frustration before replying, "I was thinking of this nation! That if we could get our hands on that entity it could push America into a new golden age of Science!"

The general's anger brimmed when he heard these words, "you arrogant dumb ass! you've sent those assistants out there to die!"

The Doctor shouted back, his words akin to excuses, "I personally trained each of them my self to take on life fibers!"

The general's gaze intensified "and how much experience do you have fighting life fibers?"

This seemed to break the doctor's anger as he seemed to not have a response.

Xavier then turned nervously to the laptop un-muting the radio's mic, "Mikisugi? you're approaching the signal's origin."

The general stood over the doctor who nervously looked at the general every now and then as his presence was crushing down on him.

"Copy that" Mikisugi spoke in the radio as the trucks slowed to a halt.

They had approached a large cliff with what seemed to a sizeable cave, the entrance surrounded by markings similar to the marks they saw before.

Monstrous showdown

The soldiers jogged about in several groups setting up a perimeter as the trucks have been placed a circular formation around the cave's entrance. Mikisugi and Tsumugu stood at the centre of the circle looking into the cave while several agents behind them were checking their gear, placing an ear piece in their ear while they attached a camera onto their outfits.

An agent walked up to Mikisugi before saluting, "Sir, we took out the needles from the two assistants of Doctor Xavier, they told us they had lost communications with the other members of their team for the past hour."

Mikisugi turned his head to the agent uttering a calm "Thank you." before looking back towards the cave as the agent walked back the way he came.

Tsumugu spoke up as the two continued to look at the cave, "Its big to have made marks like those, you sure going inside is the best idea? We could try smoking it out."

Mikisugi replied calm and collected, "There's not an anti life fiber weapon big enough in our possession to smoke something that big out since your thread spool grenades wouldn't do nearly enough damage and it would shrug off any conventional weapons. Not to mention we don't know if there's any more of the doctor's assistants in there…"

Tsumugu nodded subtly in response "hm yeah you got a point, well then you're gonna have to sit this one out, chain of command and all."

Mikisugi replied with his own subtle nod "yeah makes sense, and I'm guessing you're heading in?"

Tsumugu replied to the sound of him cocking his needle sub-machine gun "of course."

Mikisugi closed his eyes with an understanding smile, "heh I expect no less from you, just try not to die."

Tsumugu was dismissive in his response "Hm, as if I would let these parasites kill me."

He then turned around to the agents behind him, all of the agents bearing needle rifles.

"Alright!" Tsumugu began to shout to the agents, "Stick together and if you see anything move that ain't your fellow agent you call it out!"

The sound of rifles being cocked filled the air as Tsumugu turned around towards the cave, "Move out!" With these last words the agents moved towards the cave.

Back in the camp, the soldiers had set up a number of monitors on the table, each one displaying different feeds from the agent's camera's which seemed to glow with the incandescent green of night vision. The general and the doctor stood behind two soldiers that sat in front of the monitors. The soldiers spoke into head set mics that linked to the soldier's ear pieces. Back at the entrance of the cave they had a similar set up, this time the screens were set up on the side of one of the trucks displaying the same feeds from the agent's camera with Mikisugi speaking into his own head set mic into the ear pieces. Within the cave was pitch black, but this was no issue for the agents as the Sun glasses they wore appeared to have inbuilt night vision, including Tsumugu who was now wearing his own pair of sunglasses. Each of the agents peered carefully down the sights of their rifles. The tension climbed higher as the claw marks became more and more prolific as they edged further and further into the cave. The further they went in the heavier the air began to feel causing the agent's apprehensiveness to rise. And then… nothing, they reach the end of the cave.

The tension changed to confusion as one of the agents could audibly be heard talking through the communications "you sure we're in the right place?"

Tsumugu observed closely, taking in every detail of the cave's dead end and noticed the end of the cave was a spherical protrusion. He then looked down at the ground around the protrusion noticing markings on the ground that seem to show that the protrusion has been moved.

"This part of the cave has been blocked off…" he placed his finger against his ear piece as he appeared to communicate with those back at the entrance "yo, seems like this part of the cave has been blocked off, can you send in a DTR?"

In accordance with Tsumugu's message a DTR piloted by an agent starts rumbling it's way into the cave. The DTR's tracks screeched as it sped up pushing against the boulder blocking the cave. The boulder began to move unveiling the continued stretch of the cave. As the agents began carefully moving inside the rest of the cave. It didn't take long for for the red glow to emanate from the walls of the cave which bared crimson threads.

"Oh my…" The doctor's face showed a mix of excitement and worry as he saw the threads through the cameras of the agents.

Mikisugi chimed in through the communications to question the doctor, "hey Xavier, what is this?"

The doctor took a moment to collect himself as a bead of sweat dropped down his forehead, "I'm not entirely sure what exactly, but they shouldn't be imbued with a dominant mind and even if they were… at that mass they burn out their energy in a few hours. My guess is that they're removed parts of the life fiber entity's body."

Mikisugi continued to questioned the Doctor, "why would it remove parts of it's body?"

The doctor's voice had a shrug in his reply "No idea, although the way its structured tells me its some sort of restructuring agent to reform the area to be more habitable."

Tsumugu seemed frustrated as he spoke into his ear piece, "you know this is some real interesting posturing but can you just tell me if this shit is gonna jump out and eat my face or something."

The doctor replied with a slight chuckle "I understand your concerns as an avid film enjoyer, but no they shouldn't jump out at you."

After this explanation the squad inched their way through the cave, consistently looking at the walls carefully. The sounds of their footsteps echoed through the cave's winding tunnels, along with another sound that dragged up the tension. Scratching, incredibly loud scratching. the scratching sound Seemingly coming from deep within the cave. The fear in the agents climbed higher following Tsumugu, when suddenly, one of the agents jumped in their skin. They were looking at the wall as a person seemed to protrude out of a clump of life fibers attached to the wall.

"What the hell?!" The agent exclaimed upon seeing the individual attached to the wall.

Another asked "is that one of the doctor's assistants?!"

With another asking "Why the hell is he in the wall?!"

The doctor back in the camp seemed lost in thought before uttering his own hypothesis on what is happening, he appeared troubled about what he was witnessing, "I-it seems like they are being used as food for the life fibers on the walls…"

Tsumugu took a tailors dagger from a holster on the back of his waist, cutting into the clump of life fibers. The man soon fell out from the wall wearing a similar hazmat suit as the two individuals from before, two of the agents kneeling down to check on the man.

"These life fibers are in their incubation period, so he should be alright." Tsumugu pointed to two of the agents, "You two, Take him back to the entrance, the other seven? you're with me."

The two agents placed the man's arms over their shoulders and carried the man back the way the group came, while the others continued making their way into the cave.

Again and again the agents inched closer and closer towards the scratching noises. Every step and the tension climbed higher. Eventually they reached a large underground cavern. Looking about the cavern yielded little results until… They saw it. It's body was like a spider attached to another spider, while it stood on 6 legs, on it's back stuck out several large tendrils that swirled with every movement, it's body was purely crimson, glowing with energy. It's face seemed to be a single eye, glowing yellow and red, and seemed as if it was just a shape carved into it's body. It doesn't seem to have seen the squad yet who were hunkering low behind whatever cover they could find. The entity was huge standing easily at 5 meters tall, it wandered about the cavern it's tendrils touching the wall leaving behind a club of threads sticking onto the wall. from their position they saw more individuals stuck in the walls of the cavern, all seemingly unconscious. A single agent moved their foot, accidentally kicking a stone. The stone ricocheted across the ground. bouncing of the stone sent a sound reverberating through the cavern causing the entity to turn towards the sound's direction. The entity approached the squads position, each thud of the monster's steps was a ticking clock the squad listened out for.

"Wait for it…" Tsumugu whispered as the monster walked, "wait for it…" the monster got closer "wait for it…" and even closer "wait for it…" the monster was now right in front of them before, "NOW!" Tsumugu shouted as he threw a thread spool at the entity, the thread spool exploded seemingly disorientating the monster as it stumbled for a moment.

The nudist beach agents surrounded the entity firing needles at it. The entity screamed out a bellowing roar as the needles embedded

themselves in the entity's body. A few of the agents reloaded their rifles while the others continued firing, the entity convulsing at their attacks. The tendrils on the entity's back starting wiggling and swiping at the agents who hid behind more rocks for cover while Tsumugu had planted more thread spools at the entity's feet. The thread spools exploded knocking the entity onto it's chest. Tsumugu ran around the entity, firing at the entity with his thread SMG. However the entity seemed to stand up, the needles seeming to be pushed out of the entity's body, dropping onto the ground.

Tsumugu jumped behind a barricade of rock, looking over his shoulder frustrated, "Damn, that thing is tough…" he growled before noticing a pole like object on the ground.

The doctor suddenly spoke up, "wait Tsumugu! could that be…?"

Tsumugu angrily responded, "You wanna hurry up, I'm kinda busy here!"

The doctor spoke clearly in return "That spear, that must belong to one of my assistants, its an anti life fiber tool I designed, implant it into the entity and it SHOULD send a signal to the entity's life fibers to cease all activity."

Tsumugu picked up the spear, the sounds of gunshots raging in the background, "This thing?"

The Doctor desperately commanded him through the ear piece, "jam that into the monster!"

Tsumugu grits his teeth in frustration " *tch* this better work!"

Tsumugu gestured to the agents with a hand signal.

The agent who saw the signal shouted to the others, "Tsumugu wants us to distract it! So lets go!" The agents began shouting while all collectively firing into the entity, "GET SOOOME!"

Tsumugu leapt over the barricade of rock, running towards the entity "Eat this you red thread ass hole!"

Tsumugu planted the spear into the entity although nothing seemed to happen.

"Hit the button!" the doctor screamed through the communications, causing Tsumugu to throw his hand at the end of the spear touching the button located at the top.

The spear began to send a shock of energy into the entity, with the shock the part the entity was struck with went a bright radiating blue. The entity convulsed for a moment, before collapsing onto the ground.

The caverns were filled with the echoes of laboured breathing from the agents in reprieve from the thrill of combat. The agents looked at the entity while Tsumugu stood in surprise next to the entity's body.

"IT WORKS!" Doctor Xavier shouted triumphantly throwing his arms into the air after witnessing the sudden end of the battle.

Suddenly the agents noticed the entity moving, the spear being pushed out of it's body as it seemed to burst back to life and the doctor's joy faded to disappointment, "… kinda."

The entity began furiously crawling its way out of the cavern, squeezing itself down the cave tunnel way.

"Mikisugi! It's coming your way!" Tsumugu shouted down the communications as he and the other agents started to run back through the cave.

Mikisugi turned his head yelling commands to the soldiers and agents forming the perimeter, "GET READY, ITS COMING OUR WAY!"

The entity pushed it's way out of the cave entrance, the soldiers and remaining agents, began firing at the entity. The needles embedded themselves within the entity who seemed to slink back like before, but also similar to the previous encounter it appeared to push the needles out of it's body before slinging it's large tentacles at the trucks flipping a few of them over, the sound of the vehicles crashing onto the ground rising over the orchestra of gunfire.

Mikisugi took cover behind a truck while grumbling in frustration, "damn it how much energy does this bastard have?!"

The three doctor's assistants approached Mikisugi also taking cover behind the truck, "Mr Mikisugi! please let us help!" the three assistants held more of the same spears Tsumugu found in the cave.

"Those didn't work before!"Mikisugi shouted above the hail of noise with desperation.

The one speaking for the three assistants replied desperately, "It's because they didn't follow it up with anything! they stop life fibers but only for a moment, but they should make the entity vulnerable!"

Mikisugi realised what they meant replying "alright!" Before shouting to the other agents and soldiers "Hold your fire!"

With this the firing ceased before the three assistants stood up pressing the buttons on their spears which began emanating with blue electricity pointing the spears at the entity. They charged at the entity while the soldiers began firing again directly at the entity's tendrils.

The assistants shouted "FOR HUMANITY!" like a war cry before planting the spears in the entity's body.

The entity fell limp again with the blue colour oozing from the area where it was stabbed.

The assistants dropped to the ground as Mikisugi shouted "focus your fire on the blue spot!" causing the soldiers and agents alike to fire all their rounds into the blue area on the entity.

After a few moments of continuous firing, the radiance seemed to drain away from the entity's body, the bright crimson changing to a dark cold red signifying nudist beach's and the US government's victory.

The soldiers and agents entered the cave to retrieve the remaining captive assistants still stuck on the walls of the cave. Back at the entrance, what remained of the agents and soldiers started securing the entity as a helicopter lowered a large glass tank down by the group. A military truck arrived at the perimeter as the doctor and the general stepped out from the back of the truck.

The general stepped towards Mikisugi who was overseeing the securing of the entity, "Excellent work! All of you did brilliantly."

Mikisugi shook the general's hand, "Thank you general we should be able to organise the movement of the specimen post haste."

The general gestured to his left as doctor Xavier approached them. "By the way, the good doctor wanted to have a word with you."

The doctor drew in a large breath before speaking, his head sunk low with shame "Sir Mikisugi I… I would like to apologise, I acted foolishly and arrogant to the point that I belittled you without proper reason, I sent my own assistants on their own into the line of fire and endangering their lives because of my arrogance… I'm sorry…"

Mikisugi closed his eyes with understanding, before extending his hand out to shake hands with the doctor's, "It mustn't of been easy to admit that, I accept your apology, and hey! Those spears of yours are incredible! Along with the bravery of your assistants, it would honour us if we could put our differences aside and work together, for humanity's future."

The doctor contemplated for a moment before answering, "my pride only happened to allow us to obtain victory in this circumstance because we got lucky, I'm sure if I continue to let my pride blind me, I would be going against everything I stand for… I accept! For humanity."

The two shook hands, looking towards a bright future for humanity.

The doctor jumped up in realisation, "OH I almost forgot! I was observing the signals carefully and I… I have a theory."

The doctor grabbed the attention of both the general, Mikisugi and even Tsumugu who was now standing close by Mikisugi.

The doctor went on to explain, "The second signal seems to be the entity saying something on the lines of "I am coming." while the first signal seems to be partially encrypted, with the only part I could translate reads around "Come here." A fairly simple conversation hm?"

Mikisugi replied in contemplation, "So the signal is beckoning life fibers? Perhaps the encrypted part is a location… worrying that life fibers are capable of encrypting their messages… but why would they be beckoning one another?"

The doctor nodded in agreement, "Exactly, that's why I looked into the signal's pattern, that's when I noticed the signal bouncing across the world is different from conventional life fiber signals! its far too formulaic with a clear pattern while usually life fiber signals are much more wild and sporadic."

Mikisugi placed his hand to his chin as he nodded in return, "I see… But then…"

The doctor continued in Mikisugi's stead "Well… my theory is… that the bouncing signal is being created by people, that someone is using this signal to beckon Life fibers to some unknown location."

The shock filled there air at the doctor's sudden hypothesis, before Mikisugi uttered, "If that's true… then we could be looking at another REVOCS…"

The conversation was left on this as Nudist beach began to make their way out of America, with a few staying behind to act as their liaisons in America, the life fiber entity being carried away in the glass chamber via a cable attached to the helicopter.

Who's the queen of melodies?

It was a much colder morning than the previous days, although the three girls attributed this to the time of the day.

"Did we really have to wake this early Satsuki?" Ryūko mumbled in her dazed state.

Mako chimed in, rubbing the tiredness from her eyes "yeah Satsuki, school doesn't start for another…" She paused her sentence as she counted with her fingers, "… two hours!"

Satsuki spoke calmly with a warm smile, "trust me it will be worth it."

Ryūko started looking at her sister with suspicion, "can you at least tell us why we're going to school so early in the morning?"

Satsuki hand waved Ryūko's concerns away, "you'll see."

Mako "hmmm'd" with curiosity looking at Satsuki.

They passed through street to street before they started approaching the school. As they turned the corner approaching the school gate, they noticed an individual standing at the front gate, they waited patiently as they whistled and tapped her foot. It was clone Nui. Satsuki seemed surprised while Ryūko looked at Satsuki irritated while Mako simply waved to Nui.

Clone Nui turned to them in her own surprise "Oh, hello!"

Ryūko ignored Nui's greeting, questioning her sister, "Satsuki, explain."

Satsuki continued her surprise, questioning Nui instead of replying to Ryūko "N-Nui? what are you doing?"

Nui responded flustered, turning to the three girls, "Oh I… I wanted to wait up for you guys…"

Ryūko sparked up in surprised confusion, "Wait, but we're here early! When the hell did you get here?"

Nui clumsily pulled her arm up to look at her watch. "erm… It was at… four AM."

The three girls stared in shock at Nui in unison as Satsuki uttered "you've been here since four AM? May I ask why?"

Clone Nui tapped her fingers together blushing "I didn't know when you were coming to school…"

True Nui appeared floating over Clone Nui's shoulder, "See? I told you it was dumb." This causing Clone Nui to throw an irritated look in True Nui's direction.

"It's kinda cute." Suddenly a shrill, familiar voice had burst out from within the school gate, "her staying outside the school for so long, it's like a sad puppy." The voice belonged to none other than Nonon Jakuzure.

Nonon stood confidently in front of the school, appearing to wear a different school uniform, Her jacket was a dark crimson with a matching coloured skirt, she wore a white shirt underneath along with a black tie. She had the same hair as so long ago with the bright pink colour and two long bangs with her hair tied up and concealed by a large marching band hat, coloured with a similar crimson as her uniform, bearing white tips while on the center above Nonon's head there was large white skull and crossbones with black spaces for eyes embroidered onto the hat.

"Ah Nonon, its been too long." Satsuki greeted Nonon with a warm smile

Nonon replied with her own proud bright smile as she calmly approached the group. "Indeed it has been lady Satsuki…"

She spoke elegantly when speaking to Satsuki before turning to the others. "Oh hello new girl."

she seemed to be addressing Ryūko, "jeez Nonon you're gonna keep calling me that? I'm hardly new any more."

Nonon sighed seemingly in agreement, "Hm… I suppose you're right… Oh I know! I'll call you rowdy girl~"

Ryūko showed a slight bit of irritation as she replied, "I'm your lady's sister aren't I? you should be calling me lady Ryūko."

Nonon paused for a moment before responding in condescension, "Yeah I'm not gonna do that."

Nonon then turned to Mako, "Oh and how are you doing, *under achiever?* "

Nonon's demeaning question seemed to frustrate Mako who responded with "for the last time it's Mako! Mako Mankanshoku!" Before immediately flipping to a cheerful attitude, "and I'm doing fine thank you!"

Nonon's head then turned to Clone Nui who had desperately been trying to keep up with the conversation. "And you, Satsuki told me about what happened; you're clone Nui right?"

Nui nodded in affirmation.

"You seem like a nice enough version of her, a total air head, but nice." This comment from

Nonon appeared to make Nui confused as she tried to determine whether she got complimented, insulted, or both.

Suddenly Nonon's gaze grew in intensity, "However… If either you or that other crazy Nui do anything that even mildly makes lady Satsuki uncomfortable, I'm gonna leave you suffering for the rest of your life with burst ear drums and repressed memories, understand?"

Clone Nui was frozen with fear at the sudden threat before quickly nodding with "y-yes Miss Nonon…"

Nonon then happily nodded with a "good!"

Satsuki turned to Nui quietly in reassurance, "don't mind her she's just a bit… protective."

True Nui then appeared above clone Nui's head commenting on Nonon, "Isn't she just the most adorable little fire cracker?"

This causing clone Nui to shoot another irritated look in her direction.

"Alright enough with the small talk, can one of you now explain whats going on?" Ryūko seemingly fed up with the casual conversation asked not long after Nonon's greetings.

"Well I don't know if you know but I ended up joining the prestigious band club at my school." Nonon began to explain, her smugness could be heard in every word. "And that club has a program called "musical Japan" where the government-" Nonon seemed to interrupt herself to add a side note mid sentence "who supports the program by the way. Yes that's how good it is." She then continued your explanation, "The government will drive us out all across the country to talent scout at different schools, so we can find any students who are skilled enough to join the "musical Japan orchestra" an Elite orchestral performance group made up of the best adolescent musical artists from all around Japan." She oozed pride in every sentence, "and it just so happened that we are coming to your high school, so I asked Lady Satsuki if she wanted to come in early to meet the other members of my club and well… she insisted that she bring you two, so you better be honoured!"

Ryūko nodded casually in comprehension of this, "Huh that actually sounds pretty cool."

While Mako appeared ecstatic, "Wow! I'm gonna meet super elite people! that's so cool!"

Nonon sighed pinching the bridge of her nose while she shook her head with closed eyes, "Ugh they're gonna embarrass me…"

Satsuki grabbed Nonon's attention, "Could Nui come as well?"

The question surprising all with a collective "huh?!" Except Mako who continued to fantasise over all the people she could meet.

Satsuki asked again to clarify, "could Nui join us in meeting your band club?"

Nonon answered seemingly troubled by the question, "I-I guess that could be alright…"

Ryūko shouted in her surprise, "What are you doing Satsuki?!"

Satsuki spoke tentatively in her reply, "you said you would defend her for having a normal life, but she can't have a normal life she doesn't know much of the world… I want her to experience more of that world…"

Nonon and clone Nui started staring at Satsuki with admiration, as Nui uttered "Satsuki…"

Ryūko blushed looking away brashly, "F-fine! she can join in."

Ryūko gaving in reluctantly to Satsuki's request before they started walking into the school.

The girls made their way through the school, passing by class after class, before arriving at a metal push in double door. Nonon opened the doors revealing a large Gymnasium the door gleamed with polish as light poured in from the windows on both sides of the gym. A

stage Is at the back bearing red curtains on both sides. On the stage is a group of students wearing various different uniforms with majority of the students wearing the same crimson uniforms as Nonon with the male students wearing the crimson uniform having trousers instead of a skirt. Each of the students sat by various instruments, with one per student, these instruments were all an orchestral being a mix of drums, trombones, horns, violas, violins and various other instruments, with a large piano standing out in particular situated at the front right of the stage. A female student wearing the same uniform as Nonon sat in front of the piano hitting seemingly hitting random notes, she was about the height of Satsuki with a similar coloured hair tied into a pony tail, she had emerald green eyes and soft warm elegant features on her face, she bared a golden suit clip on her jacket which took the shape of a musical note.

The girl's eyes perked up when she saw the group of girls walking in. "Oh Satsuki! You're here! Oh and your other friends are here as well! Nonon's told me a lot about all of you."

She turned to Nui her gaze containing unfamiliarity, "Oh she didn't mention you though, I'm sorry but can I ask your name?"

Nui blushed slightly, and replied, her face seemed rather lost in shyness, "O-oh Erm, my name is Nui Harime Nice to meet you…"

The girl replied gracefully "Aw you are so cute! My name is Setsuko Wakana, its a pleasure to meet all of you!"

Ryūko smiled in soft slyness "Heh, with a name like that you must of been born to play music."

Setsuko chuckled as softly, "I guess you could say that, although my father is a factory worker so I wouldn't say its entirely in my blood."

Setsuko started looking at Nui before saying, "… Triangle." She then looks at Satsuki before saying, "… Oh! Piano, how nice." she then looks Ryūko before saying, "hmm… guitar…" She went on to look at

Mako with a long pause, "… yeah I'm getting nothing from you." provoking confused noises from Mako.

Ryūko spoke up in her own confusion, "Sorry but what are you doing?"

Setsuko replied in her polite offset, "Oh my apologies, I was just figuring out what instruments you play."

Satsuki returned the politeness, "but Setsuko… I don't play any instruments…"

Setsuko nodded slightly, "well yes, you don't play instruments, but the musician inside your heart does."

Nonon expresses great joy in admiration towards Setsuko, "Very well said club president!"

Ryūko smiles again this time with sly condescension at Nonon, "huh I expected the great Nonon Jakuzure to be the club president."

Nonon replied aggressively, "Hey! watch your mouth ruffian."

However Setsuko cut through the tension between them with her soft elegant demeanour, "Indeed Nonon is incredibly talented, especially in her skills as a conductor, that just makes me even more honoured to be the president of our prestigious club."

Again Nonon turned to look at Setsuko with admiration, "aw president…"

This causing Ryūko to throw out an off hand comment "Huh, I guess Nonon has a type."

Nonon snapped back at her with "Shut it!"

Meanwhile Clone Nui appeared to be lost in her own thoughts as she uttered under her breath, "I wonder what instrument she would say True Nui would play?"

The true Nui in question then appeared floating on clone Nui's right, "Probably violin, Maman at one point even wanted me to learn violin, but changed her mind believing it would only serve to take away from my other studies."

Clone Nui appeared troubled by this before suddenly being dragged away by Nonon. Nui then found herself on the stage holding a metal triangle and a little metal stick matching with the triangle.

Nonon was standing in front of Nui, she pointed at her with her other hand on her waist as she posed in a commanding way, "alright you're gonna play the triangle."

Nui looked back at Nonon rather troubled and confused, "Wait but I don't know how!"

Nonon smiled smugly, "Oh its easy, when I gesture to you, you hit the triangle, got it?"

Nui continues to look troubled as she mumbles out an "oh ok…"

Nonon then moved towards the center of the stage.

Meanwhile back off the stage Setsuko turned to Ryūko, "Ryūko? Do you play any instruments?"

Ryūko does a hand waving motion to signify a negative gesture, "Nah, not me, honestly if anyone were to play an instrument out of us it would of been Satsuki."

She ends her sentence with dismissive laugh, while Satsuki appeared to shoot a subtle stare towards Ryuko, showing a level of intrigue.

Setsuko replied casually "Ah well if you ever want to learn some time I would be happy to teach you."

Ryūko in turn gave a relaxed and joyful, "yeah thanks."

Setsuko then made her way onto the stage. She sat on a seat in front of the piano tucking her skirt beneath her legs, She then spoke out to the other students who had been chattering amongst themselves while Setsuko had her conversation off stage.

"Alright everyone we'll have a short practice period then we'll start the first set." after Setsuko uttered this the stage broke out into incoherent noises as every student appeared to play random notes with even Setsuko closing her eyes and playing random keys on the piano.

This continued for a few moments confusing the three girls that watched below and Nui who continued on stage till suddenly, Setsuko placed her hand in the air and the hall becomes completely silent. Then began counting down with her fingers before reaching her last finger. When one finger was left the orchestra had burst into life once again, this time playing: The Piano Concerto number. 21 - Andante by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart:

(As stated Andante the piano concerto no. 21 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart plays within this scene, listen to the song while reading for the full effect.)

The glorious melody filled the room as Nonon's arms waved in gestures towards the many different students who created sounds in accordance with Nonon's gestures. A minor ting of a triangle could be heard within the tune of the symphony often at the wrong time as Nui failed to recognise when Nonon was gesturing to her and when she was not causing Nonon to shoot angered stares in her direction. Setsuko on the piano was now playing flawlessly, each note in place, her eyes closed and her body swaying with the progression of the music. The three girl's faces were absorbed in amazement as the orchestra continued their rendition of the song. Nonon bared a wide smile as she found joy in her movements gesturing to each musician at the correct timing, eventually clasping her hands together when the symphony was reaching a conclusion.

Satsuki and Ryuko had a joyful smile while Mako's face was still amazed. The three dolled out a round of applause to the orchestra.

Ryūko cheered with a "That was awesome!"

Nonon began to bow proudly towards the applause.

The applauding continued for a moment till Clone Nui began shuddering, as suddenly blood seemed to seep out of her arm, the blood appearing to form a blood version True Nui much to the shock and fear of those not in the know. "Not to be that girl, but to absolutely be that girl, If my knowledge supplied from my good clone here is correct, homeroom should be starting soooooooon!"

Ryūko jumped up in the realisation, "Oh crap she's right! we gotta go!"

The blood seeped back into clone Nui's body and she jumped down to join the three off stage, "could you at least warn me when you do that…" Clone Nui grumbled under her breath causing True Nui to appear by her side to stick out her tongue mockingly.

Setsuko looked incredibly confused and horrified by the sight of the blood formed Nui "What the hell was that?!"

The four girls ran out the room, with Satsuki stopping with a quick bow, "its er… complicated…" before following the other three out of the hall.

The four girls managed to make it to their class just in time, a few seconds before their teacher walked through the door. The classes passed by quickly, Mako and Ryūko's tiredness suddenly unveiling itself. Nui seemed to be strangely alert till she suddenly fell asleep mid class, however everyone was extremely awake when they noticed Satsuki herself, sleeping mid class, attracting the whole class' attention even the teacher's at such a rare event. The school day ended, and the the girls were walking home.

"Well this is where I depart! Oh hey Musashi!" Nui spoke awkwardly before waving to a passerby, knowing they were a Nudist beach agent who waved back seemingly irritated.

Satsuki spoke up calmly, "Mako, could you give Nui some company for a little bit? I need to talk to my sister in private."

Mako looked confused for a moment but gasped in realisation, "Ooooh sister talk huh? Of course of course, this is a perfect opportunity to talk to Nui about all my favourite types of bugs! don't worry Nui there's not many of them."

Mako and Nui walked away with Mako chattering on, presumably about nonsense.

"So what do you want to talk about?" Ryūko asked casually.

"May I ask, why did you lie to Setsuko?" Satsuki asked in return, her voice warm yet stern.

Her question rousing a level of surprise from Ryūko, "huh?"

Satsuki continued, "You told me once that you played guitar but you told Setsuko you didn't play anything." Ryūko fell quiet for a moment, causing Satsuki to look towards her showing her concern, "Its alright if you don't want to talk about it."

Ryūko spoke up tentatively, "it's… nothing really I just… yeah I don't want to talk about it."

Satsuki nodded warmly, "I understand, if you change your mind feel free to talk to me, its… what sisters are for."

Ryūko suddenly hugged Satsuki who surprised from the embraced, "Thank you… sis." She said warmly.

Satsuki closed her eyes and smiled in return, wrapping her arms around Ryūko, "You're welcome… Sis" the two sisters exited the

embrace, Satsuki casually mentioning "I'm gonna head home now and drink a Hilarious amount of tea, I… kinda feel sorry for Soroi."

Ryūko chuckled softly "heh, right, see ya!"

Ryūko let Satsuki walk away, her face then changed to quite melancholy, "guitar… huh."

Ryūko was lost in contemplation as she re-joined Mako and drifted her way home.

A thousand words unsaid

Ryūko was sat along side Mako and her family as they chowed down on croquettes with an untamed ferocity. Ryūko ate her own food, however she seemed still lost in thought, her food still mostly whole.

Mako's mother was the first to pick up on this, "Are you alright Ryūko dear?"

Mako's father added on "Yeah, you barely touched your plate!"

Ryūko spoke tentatively to not worry them, "I'm alright, just… thinking about stuff… I… can I borrow the bike for tonight?"

Without skipping a beat Mako's dad replied with, "Oh yeah sure, you use it more than us anyway, but you sure you want to head out so late?"

Mako's brother spoke up too, "yeah! if you go any where far even on this bike you'll be back super late." he then audibly gasped joyfully, "OH could I come with!?"

Mako's mother pinched the brother's ear, "Oh no you don't!" She then turned to Ryūko as Mako's brother recovered from his pinched ear. "Oh! I have an idea, I could make you a snack box!"

Ryūko smiled in bemusement, "Thats not-"

Mako suddenly got close to Ryūko pulling her face up to her own. "Come on Ryūko! you shouldn't miss out on my mom's snack pack!"

Ryūko raised her arms relenting, "Alright, alright! I'll take the snack pack, thanks Misses M."

Ryūko got on the mankanshoku's red motor cycle, snack pack in tow. Mako and her family waving to her as she got ready to drive away, Ryūko looking back at them with a warm smile and her own

little wave. Ryūko then turned the key to the motor cycle causing it's engine to erupt into life, she placed her foot on the peddle as the bike began moving causing her to raise her other leg off the ground and the bike sped down the streets. Ryūko zoomed down through street after street eventually finding herself within the winding streets of the Japanese country side. Ryūko kept driving into the cold of the night, careful to avoid the edge of the cliff-like hills the road she drove upon was situated against, the road in front of her illuminated by the bike's front light. A few more moments of driving had passed till she pulled up, as she stepped off the bike she pulled her phone from her right hand pocket, unlocking the screen and selecting the torch icon in the settings menu. The phone's light ignited immediately revealing she had pulled up in front of the burned cinders of what was left of the Matoi household.

Ryūko looked around for a few moments before the moon revealed itself from behind dark clouds, bathing the area with moonlight replacing the phone's light. Ryūko put away her phone and walked about the area, each site of the scene bringing up memories she had long put behind her. She located the hole she had made, when she used Senketsu to burst into the underground area of the house, causing her to smile from the sentimentality. Ryūko dropped down from the hole into the large area beneath. She pulled out her phone again looking about the area, the massive pile of clothing filling the room. She moved about the room, looking towards the other end before noticing a door made out of steel, a wheel shaped handle akin to a submarine's porthole opening fixture affixed to the center of the door. Ryūko span the wheel although it buckled against her grip, even with her strength. Eventually the door opened revealing itself to be multiple centimetres thick. Within the door appeared to be some sort of steel panic room although instead of any people the room was filled with various objects, Statues, paintings, gold bricks, porn magazines and various other objects of obvious value. When Ryūko saw it, a pristine acoustic guitar. Ryūko picked up the guitar by it's neck, as she looked in shocked recognition. The memories flooded back. She was packing up her things, getting ready to move to her next boarding school, after she was kicked out of her last one.

"Ryūko" Isshin was running his sewing machine, as Ryūko was walking out with her large steel case when Isshin turned his head, his long white hair whipped around, his face was striking and cold, "you forgot that."

Isshin pointed to A guitar propped up in the corner of the room, his voice was as cold as his face was, grumbling in his raspiness.

Ryūko was dismissive, and cold in return, "Do whatever you want with it, I don't play anymore." Ryūko had her back turned towards Isshin, not even looking at him as she was about to walk away.

"So what are you doing with that?" Isshin referred to the metal case she carried over her shoulder via a strap.

"I can probably find a use for it, see ya." Ryūko walked out of the room, making that what would be the end of Ryūko's memories, however the memory continues, as Ryūko realises what must of happened after she left.

Isshin looked at the guitar for a moment before standing, taking the guitar in his hands. He made his way through the house, pulling a book on a book case, causing the case to move to the side. He entered through the passage revealed by the book case making it into the house's basement. He approached the metal door and with a heavy grunt he pulled on the wheel to open it. After the door opened, he located a spot in the panic room to situate the guitar, propping it up carefully. Isshin took one look at the guitar, staring sentimentally, before closing the door.

Ryūko was smiling, sentimentality overflowing within her. She began embracing the guitar, emotions filled her face as her memories ran back through her mind. She found tears dripping from her eyes quickly wiping them away. She made her way out of the basement, jumping her way out of the hole with the guitar on her back slung over with a strap. She got back on her bike and drove off into the night, the memories continued to flood her mind. When she got back to the house, it was around midnight so of course Mako and her

family were snoring away. Ryūko joined them carefully making her way through the house, however Mako appeared at the door to the room Ryūko was creeping through.

Mako was holding a baseball bat with a few nails in it looking scared half to death till she realised it was Ryūko, "oh you're back! I thought it might of been someone trying to steal our socks." Mako suddenly started looking incredibly shocked, "wait a sec! Is that a guitar?!"

Ryūko seemed quite awkwardly worried, "yes it is Mako, but can you quiet down?"

Mako seemed to punish herself casually, comically whispering, "Ah right, my bad. So er… were you gonna play it tomorrow?"

Ryūko seemed dismissive about the notion, "oh nah… I just thought it would bring up old memories y'know?"

Mako appeared rather melancholic after Ryūko said this, "memories of your dad and Senketsu?" This hit Ryūko hard as she didn't think Mako would realise, Mako continued in her sadness, "I would really like to hear you play I'm sure Satsuki would like to hear it as well and… I think Senketsu and your dad would've liked that too…"

Ryūko remained silent as Mako rubbed her eyes, before uttering "goodnight…" and then leaving the room.

Ryūko's eyes changed from shock to clarity and she began to leave the house, stopping a few meters away in the side alley. She held the strings on both ends of the guitar as if to play it with the strap keeping it close to her by being locked around the back of her neck. She then strum away into the night, the sounds were off, as Ryūko tried to recall the memories she had of playing the guitar, but nevertheless she played, cold and alone but still she played.

Ryūko woke up next to Mako still in her clothes from last night and tired as hell as she went to sleep not too long ago, however the alarm on her phone still waking her up.

"Oh crap!" she realised she would be late to join Satsuki in visiting the music club who was still visiting the school.

She rushed to get ready and pulled Mako out of the house who was still half asleep. Ryūko and Mako made it to school to see Satsuki and Nui waiting at the front gate.

Satsuki spoke up as they approached, "Ah Ryūko, Mako, me and Nui saw the music club it was quite a strange experience having to explain why a version of Nui made out of blood burst out of her body but overall it was very pleasant, I tried coming to your house but Mrs Mankanshoku told me that you both seemed rather tired so I decided to leave you be."

Ryūko seemed irritably embarrassed in her reply, "I'm so sorry Satsuki…"

Satsuki shook her head calmly in response, "no need for the apology, Nui insisted that after we saw the band club, we should wait outside for you two."

Nui blushed slightly upon hearing this as Satsuki continued, "Wait that case… Did you want to…"

Ryūko bared her own heavy blush, "y-yeah… I did…"

Satsuki contemplated for a moment, "Nonon mentioned that the Club stays for a little while after school as well as coming in early, so we should be able to do it then."

Ryuko's eyes lit up as she looked at Satsuki directly, "really?"

Satsuki smiled warmly in her reply "Indeed, and if they say they don't have enough time then I'll make it an order from the eternal student class president."

Ryūko hugged Satsuki who embraced her back, Mako and clone Nui smiled joyfully, while true Nui appeared floating by clone Nui's side

frowning and seemingly staring longingly at the two sisters. The group then made their way into class, Ryūko especially impatient to reach the end of the day. She attracted a lot of attention from her class mates due to the large metal case she kept by her feet, with many of the class members discussing what could be inside. Finally, the bell rings signifying the end of the school day, Ryūko pulling the case up slinging it over her shoulder as she walked with the other three towards the school gymnasium.

The four girls stepped inside through the gym's double doors, and as they hoped the band club was still there. The presence of the four immediately grabbed the attention of Setsuko and Nonon, who walked over to greet them.

"Oh hey! Its good to see you both, Ryuko and Mako." Setsuko said with a welcoming smile.

Satsuki spoke up to grab her attention, "Setsuko, Nonon. Ryūko was too embarrassed before to admit this, but she does in fact play the guitar, and has brought it today in the hope she can play it for us to hear."

Nonon showed casual surprise in her response to this "Wait really?"

Ryūko blushed heavily her embarrassment showing clear as day, "y-yeah…"

Setsuko was delighted revealing her joy immediately, "That's amazing! and is that's what's in that case? I am so happy to hear that! Would you like to show us now?"

Ryūko was surprised at the notion, her blush refusing to leave her face, "Oh yeah sure…"

A stool was set at the center of the stage Ryūko pulled out her guitar from her case, she set down on the stool the strap around the back of the neck, as she held the guitar to get ready to play. Her heart

fluttered for a moment, as her finger tips touched the strings. She took in a deep breath, then she began to play:

(Within this scene, the music that plays is "I want to know, Instrumental version" Composed by Hiroyuki Sawano for the Kill la Kill original soundtrack, please listen to said song while reading to get the full effect of the scene.)

The notes filled the room with melancholy, Ryūko faded from the room, lost in her own mind. Memories that haunted her returning like ghosts; the day her father lost his life, the day she met Senketsu, other instruments joined her strums in her mind as she continued to play and her memories changing again and again. The day she spoke to Mako about wishing she knew her father better, the day she faced her father's killer, the day she found out about her mother. The day she found her sister and the day she… lost her friend. These emotions enveloped her as the room seemed to fall away. Ryūko finished strumming her guitar, the room was silent, as Ryūko realised tears were pouring from her eyes. Ryūko placed the guitar within the case before briskly walking off the stage, and out of the gymnasium, Mako and Satsuki following her as they looked in concern. Clone Nui stared in their direction, her face mixed concern with clarity, True Nui looked in their direction as well her face more curious than understanding as she floated above clone Nui's head.

Ryūko had went to the roof, looking over a sunset in the distance. Satsuki and Mako stood by her doing their best to comfort her, as Mako stroked her shoulders with Satsuki looking off in the same direction Ryūko looked, while holding her hand on Ryūko's back. The door squeaked slightly signifying someone's entrance. It was Nui.

Satsuki approached her as she entered, "Nui, you… this isn't a very good time-"

Ryūko suddenly interrupted, "Nah its alright."

Satsuki looked at Ryūko in surprise, but relented and moved aside. Nui looked incredibly worried at Ryūko, every fiber in her body told

her she should leave including the life fiber being in her body.

A quiet moment passed, before Ryūko spoke up, "you know you are the last person I wanted to see"

Nui responded in a miniature panic, "I mean you aren't looking at me… But I get the sentiment!"

Ryūko uttered, a sly smile hiding her malice, "you know… its real hard playing nice with you…"

Nui again panicked "you don't have to play nice with me… or anything for that matter! You know unless you want to…"

Ryūko chuckled, "Don't be an idiot Nui, if I didn't play nice with you I would straight up kill you…"

Nui was afraid for a moment before her face changed to strong determination, "I… understand but Ryūko, I can't allow myself to die… I made a promise to someone, that me and them would live a normal life."

Ryūko grit her teeth with frustration, "ugh, you're way too nice for your own good you know that?"

Nui started grabbing the ends of her jacket scrunching it up in her hands, her face was overcast with emotions as she seemed to look at the ground, "I'm not nice… I'm the one that killed your father…"

Ryūko turned to Nui in quiet shock at her sudden declaration, "huh?"

Nui continued, her face seemingly twisted in turmoil, "Thats why you cried right? Because my life reminds you that you have see the monster that killed your father every day! And I can't turn away from you! I'm just too selfish…" Nui looked up at Ryūko in horror, the anguish conveyed alone through her remaining eye, "I don't deserve to be considered nice!"

At this sight Ryūko's face changed to solemn understanding, she started walking in silence before stopping just as she passed Nui. She simply uttered "I see." before she walked back through the door from the roof.

Clone Nui collapsed onto her knees in the silence true Nui watching her floating in the air in disdain. Satsuki and Mako looked at her quietly, Mako worriedly with even Satsuki unveiling a touch of worry before following Ryūko through the door from the roof, leaving Nui all alone as she watched the sun set.

The servants

Nui was sitting underneath her kokatsu table, sighing as the rain poured against the window, the light of the hotel room breaking out into the night outside. She sighed as she placed both her hands on her favourite handle-less tea cup while the TV in the top left corner of the room displayed various over the top advertisements. Nudist beach had accepted her request to retrieve her items from her old apartment.

Clone Nui took a sip of her green tea, "You know its quite strange not having to go to work each day after school, its leaving me with an abundance of free time…"

True Nui appeared laying down, floating in the air as she slowly drifted around the room, "well at least you don't have to be left alone with your own thoughts huh?"

Clone Nui placed her elbow on the table as she held up her head with her hand on her chin looking incredibly bored, "yeah you would think that wouldn't you…"

True Nui was now laying on her stomach, kicking her feet up and down casually, "You're still thinking about what happened today right?"

Clone Nui calmly nodded, "Mhm… Ryūko seemed like the quiet angry when she walked away, I wonder if she's more mad at me than before…"

True Nui shrugged casually, "eh who knows? Ryūko is always angry, its hard to tell the degree of anger, its like it's her perma' time of the month."

This remark caused clone Nui to look at True Nui awkwardly, "I… I don't think that's true…"

True Nui looked in pretend confusion in return, "really? That's how she always seemed to me…"

Clone Nui almost laughed before remarking sarcastically, "Oh I wonder why…" Causing true Nui to continue pretending to be confused.

Down in the hotel lobby there were a combination of different individuals around the room, from a female well dressed receptionist, a man sitting at he seating area on the right side of the hotel door way flicking through pages of a news paper. A mother stood on the left side in front of a pram, two men was walking out of the lobby with a carriage holding a great many suit cases, they were all Nudist beach agents. Suddenly seven men and women entered the lobby, they wore unremarkable black business suits and each of them carried brief cases.

The seven individuals approached the reception desk, with the man at the front turning to the receptionist directly, "hello, I would like to book a room."

The receptionist stayed professional but it was obvious she was hiding her concern as she tapped on her keyboard into the reception computer, "o-of course, so is it gonna be rooms for all seven?"

"No just the one." The man answered, when suddenly the receptionist heard the click of a gun as she looked up to see the man wearing leather gloves and holding a pistol with a black silencer attached to the end "Whichever room Nui Harime is staying."

The other six individuals had seemingly put on black gas masks and were holding matching pistols against the head of every other agent in the lobby with the man at the reception placing his own mask against his head with his other hand as he held the gun, the straps seem to snap themselves into place with the buckles automatically clicking together implying they are some sort of mechanical device.

The receptionist attempted to subtly press the alarm underneath her desk only for the the man to interrupt knowing she was about to sound the alarm, "Hands on the keyboard, and let me see the screen."

The tension climbed higher as the receptionist continued pressing the keys to her computer, as the man stood there impatiently.

Eventually the receptionist spoke up, "Its room 117."

The man replied coldly, "Thank you for your cooperation."

Then before the receptionist could react the man pulled the trigger, executing her coldly. In sequence all the other six did so as well, killing each of the agents in the room. Three of the gas mask wearing individuals searched the agent's pockets discovering their ID cards. Strangely crimson threads seemed to emanate out of the wounds of the dead agents before floating up and disappearing. The others pressed a button on each of the handles of their brief cases causing the cases to fall apart revealing the handles to be attached to assault rifles on which they each attached a silencer. Outside the building across the street, a nudist beach agent, was watching through a sniper scope into Nui's room only for another individual wearing a gas mask to appear behind them firing a bullet into their head. Back in the Hotel the individuals made their way through floor to floor, tracking the numbers of the rooms as they went, each time they ran into any individual be it guest or staff, they shot them dead no questions asked.

It wasn't too much longer before Clone Nui heard a knock on her door, "Hm?"

True Nui seemed very relaxed throwing out a bemused remark "Room service perhaps?"

Clone Nui ignored the remark as she approached the door peering into the peep hole. Her sight was met with a close up view of a

Nudist beach ID proudly displaying the nudist beach insignia, "Oh its one of the nudist beach agents."

True Nui seemed irritated, "ugh what do those fools want?"

Clone Nui to shrug casually, "only one way to find out."

Immediately after clone Nui opened the door, several tranquilliser darts shot out implanting themselves into clone Nui causing her to fall immediately onto the floor.

True Nui watched in casual surprise throwing out a curious "oh?"

Three of the gas mask wearing individuals made their way into the room as clone Nui's consciousness faded, true Nui threw out another remark, as the individuals gathered around Nui, "you don't look like nudist beach agents…"

One of the individuals spoke up commanding to the others, "quickly strain out the threads before she transforms."

The three pulled out knitting needles before implanting them into Nui's skin, they then pulled them out crimson fibers out of her body as blood poured out from the wounds.

One of the individuals who stayed out of the room spoke in saying "hurry up reinforcements could be here at any moment."

The three individuals tied the crimson threads around Clone Nui, as soon as they did this, True Nui disappeared and they picked up clone Nui and carried her out.

Clone Nui awakened in what appeared to a white chamber with a glass front, behind the glass was a dark void. Nui was completely nude and appeared to be strung up by crimson threads, the threads seemed to protrude out of her body and tied around her, with many wrapping her chest, legs and feet. The threads were planted into the walls of the chamber and suspended Nui in the air. Nui's sight was

hazy constantly shifting in and out of conscious and unconscious. Suddenly a spot light cut through the darkness, showing a man.

The man wore a business suit with a formal military jacket over it, he also appeared to wear a combat vest, a cap matching the jacket and of course, a gas mask, "My apologies, we had to bump up the tranquilliser dosage to ensure the adrenaline spike from the injuries wouldn't allow you or the other Nui to react."

Nui finally managed to wake up fully realising the situation, "what the hell!? Where am I?! Why am I naked?! And who the hell are you perv!?"

Nui tried to tug against the threads causing the man to speak up once again "don't struggle. you will only hurt yourself."

Nui unveiled her anger, "Screw you! You pervert! The other Nui is gonna kick your ass!"

A smug smile could be heard in the man's voice, "I'm afraid the other Nui isn't here right now."

Nui's anger turned to confusion, "Huh?!"

The man replied again with the same air of arrogance, "She hasn't been speaking right?"

Nui looked around mixing her confusion with worry, "Nui? Nui?!"

The man continued as Nui's gaze wandered in her fear, "And I have no interest in such vulgar things, you are only nude so we could carry out a full life fiber bind, your connection to the life fibers in your body has been temporarily severed."

Nui's fear fully set in as she realised the danger she was in, "Are… are you going to kill me?"

The man was cold in his response, "Well that depends on the choice."

Nui's worries and pain flowed into her voice as every word the man said filled her with anxiety, "C-choice?"

The man walked to his left for a moment continuing to face Nui in the chamber, a mechanical panel situated on that side propped up by a metal pole en-wrapped by dozens of wires, "In my organisation I am known as "the operator" and like the name implies I carry out operations in the field, mostly to obtain high priority targets, such as yourself. However I have more than one target. Luckily I'm quite the opportunist and your life makes for quite the fine opportunity-"

Nui's frustration grew as the operator prattled on, "Can you get to the point?!"

The operator continued immediately after Nui's interruption, "The point Nui Harime, is that there's going to be a choice, the choice being is either the tools built into that chamber is activated severing the life fibers that contain true Nui, or a guillotine is dropped and kills both of you."

Nui wasted no time deciding how to reply, "HUH?! What kind of choice is that?! There's no way I'm choosing either of those!"

Another smug smile could be heard in the man's voice, "well its a good thing that it won't be you making that choice."

Nui was lost in shock only uttering, " who hell are you guys…"

The operator's figure gleams with pride as he announces with a sinister tone, "We are… The servants of the thread."

The door to the apartment swung open as Mikisugi made his way inside sighing heavily seemingly in reprieve. "Ah! finally I'm home, that was one hell of a flight, how the hell on all these years did I not know that Tsumugu was such a loud snorer…"

Mikisugi Made his way into the kitchen grabbing a a can from the fridge of what appeared to be beer.

He sat down on the sofa with a relaxed demeanour, in sequence with the refreshing sound of the can's clip clicking and the air being released from the can. "Ain't too late for a beer right? well as long as it doesn't worsen the jet lag…" He continued to talk to himself, "… And now I can just sit back and reeeeelax-" Just as he was going to take a sip of the beer, his phone started ringing disappointing the tired out Mikisugi.

He sighed as he pulled up his phone selecting the button to answer, "Hello? Mikisugi speaking."

A Nudist beach agent's voice emanated from the phone, "Sir we have a situation."

Mikisugi answered casually, his voice bereft of energy, "I'm sure you may be having a lot of trouble without your fearless leader, but can't this wait? I just got home."

The agent got straight to the point to waste no time at all, "No sir it cannot, someone has attacked the hotel."

Mikisugi's face changed from causal inconvenience to surprised worry, "wait what?!"

The agent continued reflecting Mikisugi's worry, "Indeed, and Nui is gone, we really need your consultation on this."

Mikisugi unveiled his urgency as he stood up from the sofa, "Alright, I'm on my way."

Mikisugi made his way quickly out of the apartment, getting in his car; The naked shooting star, and sped down the streets driving towards the hotel. Mikisugi pulled up at the front, greeted by a Nudist beach agent who was waiting outside.

The agent saluted as Mikisugi exited his car, "Mikisugi Sir!"

Mikisugi nodded as he walked towards the hotel entrance.

As he walked, Tsumugu on his motorcycle arrived, parking by his Mikisugi's car, "Told you we should of killed her."

Mikisugi seemed dismissive about the sentiment, "We don't know if she ran away or-"

Tsumugu quickly interrupted him "Doesn't matter, its because we let her live that we were attacked."

Mikisugi was silent in return as him, the agent and Tsumugu walked into the hotel. Their sight was instantly met with a crime scene of blood patches sprayed against the wall and floor. Agents went around the scene wearing gloves and using several investigatory tools to gather evidence. The agent described the situation as Mikisugi started looking around the scene and Tsumugu stood by the door leaning against the wall, "we've counted thirty eight of our agents dead so far, those that we found were taken back to base for autopsy, we've got several agents investigating all areas of the building, they even took out our sniper situated across the street."

Mikisugi's seriousness came through on every movement he made, as he looked painfully at each of the blood splatters, "Can I assume that the bullets have been taken out and sent to ballistics?"

The agent seemed to panic for a moment before responding, "About that sir… we can't seem to find the bullets, not in their bodies or in the scene. And the bodies show no signs of further intrusion so we're not sure how they got out the bullets from their bodies."

Mikisugi was solemn in his response merely uttering a simple "I see"

The agent then spoke up gesturing to the door to the rooms, "Sir would you like to take a look at Nui Harime's room?"

Mikisugi answered with a simple nod as the three left the lobby.

Tsumugu was discussing angrily with Mikisugi who stoically made their way through the hotel as they were about to reach Nui's room,

"How do we know it wasn't Nui who killed those guards?"

Mikisugi replied calmly, "guns aren't her usual choice of weapons."

Tsumugu's frustrations came through his argument, "we don't know what she can do, and we don't know she has any allies either!"

Mikisugi stopped in the middle of the hallway looking at Tsumugu, fed up, "come on Tsumugu we both know you're grasping at straws."

Tsumugu seemed to vent his frustrations, "Bullshit, you're the one desperate to keep this bitch alive for whatever reason. I'm the one out of the two of us that has their straws fully stocked."

They reached the room, taking a step inside instantly seeing a large patch of blood on the floor. Mikisugi immediately crouched by the patch, observing it closely before turning his head to the agent, "You got analysis of this?"

The agent nodded, "Yes sir, came in just before I contacted you, it matches our sample of Clone Nui's blood."

Mikisugi looked back at the patch of blood, "hm… I see…"

Suddenly Mikisugi's phone started ringing. "Hello?"

He said and was answered by a rough strong female voice, "Yo, Mikisugi."

Mikisugi responded in surprise, "oh Ryūko!"

On the end of the phone call Ryūko was standing uncomfortably in her room as Mako looked worriedly from behind her, "is Nui still in her hotel room?"

Mikisugi was suddenly alarmed by the question, "wait why? what happened?"

Ryūko continued her discomfort displaying through her voice, "well i got a weird ass call, I thought it was a prank call from true Nui at first but there wasn't any punchline."

Mikisugi shifted into his professionality, "What exactly did this caller say, word for word."

Ryūko worries and fear channelled into her voice as she recounted what the caller said, "they said: Ryūko Matoi, I replied with who is this? and they carried on with: you won't know who we are, we have Nui Harime and you have a decision to make. Come to warehouse two four one on the thirty first avenue, come alone and unarmed or clone Nui dies. You have one hour." Ryūko paused for a moment to let it all sink in, "That's all they said."

Mikisugi turned to Tsumugu, "Someone's threatening to kill Nui."

Without skipping a beat Tsumugu replied, "good, let them."

Mikisugi showed frustration in his response, "It ain't your choice to make."

He spoke back into the phone, "Are you gonna go Ryūko?"

She was silent for a moment before answering, "… yeah I am, even though saving her ass is getting a bit irritating, clone Nui's a wuss, so she's got an ass that needs saving."

Mikisugi smiled confidently, "alright I'm coming with."

However Ryūko quickly responded, "No, I'm going alone like they requested."

This caused Mikisugi to snap back, "Are you insane!?"

Ryūko rebuked him with the obvious, "If I don't then they'll kill her, were you even listening?"

Mikisugi persisted with a "but…"

However he was shut down by Ryūko who returned with, "Don't worry, you know I can handle myself."

Mikisugi relented, "Alright, but we will have back up close by."

Ryūko was outside getting on her bike when she replied "Ok, but not too close, don't wanna let them spot you guys." Before she turned the key and sped off to confront the servants.

True Nui sat alone within the room that made up the space of her pocket dimension, incredibly bored.

She wasn't able to see what was going on in the outside world ever they pulled out the threads from clone Nui's body, "A life fiber bind huh… it was pretty basic but it seemed sufficient, to think it would work on me…"

She was lying on the bed staring up at the ceiling till she suddenly sat up stretching her arms, "Alright! Enough relaxing, lets see if I can get any of these life fiber connections working…"

All of a sudden a great many red threads came down from the ceiling and attaching to the floor. Nui began sifting through each of the threads, each time saying "nope." casually then moving to the next thread.

Eventually she found a thread she seemed happy with, "Oh that one works."

She wrapped the thread around her finger which seemed to send a spark of energy up the thread.

"Alright we got visuals…" the room partially faded to reveal The scene clone Nui was trapped in, "oh looks like the poop head brigade is in town and they got the other me up in a much more gnarly bind."

She continued sifting through the threads once again finding another that seemed to work, wrapping it around her finger, "And we got audio!"

After true Nui said this words echoed through the room; "the point Nui Harime is that there's going to be a choice, the choice being is either the tools built into that chamber is activated severing the life fibers that contain true Nui, or a guillotine is dropped and kills both of you." in a voice unfamiliar to her.

Another voice replying with of course; "HUH?! What kind of choice is that?! Theres no way I'm choosing either of those!"

True Nui realised the situation as the conversation continued revealing them to be called "the servants of the thread."

Nui contemplated this casually, "Hm so that how it is… well I guess its lights out for me, oh well!" True Nui sat back on the bed casually, as she accepted her fate.

Back with Clone Nui she realised what the operator's plan was, "you said you were after another target… The one that fits this situation the most would be… Ryūko!"

The operator slow clapped casually, "you're right on the money."

Nui continued in her realisation, "And you're using me to get to her, she's gonna be the one to make the choice…"

The operator nodded calmly, "yes, your life is in her hands."

Nui was dismissive about the idea, "you won't get Ryūko. She's not gonna come for me so you might as well kill me right now."

The operator hand waved such notions away, "I wouldn't be so sure, this isn't gonna be the first time she stood up for your life after all."

Just as he said this one of the servants spoke up, "Sir the second target has approached the area."

The operator turned their way, he was smug in his remark, "Right on Que"

Nui was shocked to hear this, "Ryūko came for me?"

Meanwhile Ryūko had pulled up out side the warehouse area on her bike before kicking down the stand and getting off preparing for one hell of a fight.

You are mine

"So I wonder when the ambush is gonna happen." Ryūko walked her way through the warehouse yard with a pretend casual demeanour.

Not long after she said this the air was filled with the sound of guns click clacking as she was suddenly surrounded By men and women in gas masks training their rifles on Ryūko.

"About time you guys showed up." Ryūko bared a confident smile as she stared down the assault rifles.

One of the servants stepped in front of her, "Ah Ryūko, we wasn't sure if you would show. good to have you, if you would kindly follow me."

Ryūko shrugged in again pretend casualness, "It's not like I have a choice now is it?" The servant didn't answer, as he knew the rhetorical nature of the question.

The servants marched along, continuing to surround Ryūko who looked about the area subtly. It was difficult to see but they had guards stationed within the shadows, at every corner and in every alley. They reached warehouse two four one, two guards posted by the entrance, the double door entrance sliding open to reveal a dark empty void.

Lights in the background coming to life illuminating Nui behind a pane of glass strung up within the chamber, "Ryūko!"

Before Ryūko had a chance to react, another light had burst into life. A spot light illuminating the operator who stood to the right of Nui's chamber in front of the electronic panel which now faced away from Ryūko.

"Welcome Ryūko, thank you for coming, you may call me the operator." The operator acted quite cordial as he presented himself

in Ryūko's direction.

Ryūko wasted no time in displaying her malice, "I would like to hear that from you with my foot up your ass."

The operator chuckled for a moment before answering, "ha, I heard you had quite the fiery personality, although seeing it in person isn't quite as charming as I had hoped."

Ryūko's frustration and impatience came through in her reply, "yeah yeah, enough of the shitty small talk, what the hell do you want?"

The operator nodded in understanding, "Straight down to business then, I respect that." He gestured with his right hand to Nui, "What I want from you is simple, I want you to make a choice, about the weight of a life."

True Nui continued to watch from her room, treating the scenario like you would a film. "Ugh this just kills all the suspense! I already know what choice she's gonna make and either way I'm screwed, boooooooring!"

Back in the warehouse, Ryūko looked incredibly irritated by the preposition, "And what conditions do you have for this *choice* ?"

The operator began to explain, his arms outstretched, "The conditions are; either you leave this warehouse and both clone Nui and true Nui, shall perish, or you turn yourself over to us and only true Nui, your hated enemy will die while clone Nui, the one your risked your neck for, will be allowed to walk free."

Ryūko showed irritated confusion, "Huh?"

The operator continued, "We have the tools to sever life fibers, if you turn yourself over we will only sever the life fibers connected to clone Nui's body, True Nui is gone, and Clone Nui should go free. However… If you don't." The operator, pressed a button on what seemed to be a metal panel attached to a matching stand situated

close by where the operator was standing, this immediately caused a large blade spring out of the top of the chamber. "This guillotine, will turn Clone Nui into sushi while also severing the life fibers."

Ryūko tapped her elbow with crossed arms impatiently, "And how exactly do you plan to take me in?"

In response the operator tapped a few more buttons on the metal panel, a robot arm appeared from above the chamber Nui was kept in before panning down to place a fridge sized box onto the ground. The box opened up to reveal a person shaped space, "This is a binding case, step into here and the life fibers in your body will be neutralised till you are removed, and our weapons are capable of damaging your body, I can assure you of that."

Ryūko uncomfortably shifted, "I see, So you're telling me… I have to go in that dumb case of yours or you're gonna murder lil' miss too good for her own good?"

The operator remained silent as Ryūko already knew the answer.

Ryūko started looking fed up, her anger coming through, "And you seriously don't expect me to just walk out?"

Again the operator's smugness came through in his reply, "I know you won't since you decided to come in the first place."

Ryūko couldn't answer as she knew he was right, she mumbled under breath "… So that's how it is huh…?"

The operator leaned forwards, his arms continuing to be outstretched, "Indeed…"

Ryūko hung her head low, as she seemed lost in contemplation, "I guess… I've gotten a bit too soft."

The quiet tension had hung in the air for a moment before it was interrupted by Nui's shouting from behind the glass front of the

chamber, "Don't do it Ryūko! It's not worth it!"

Ryūko began slowly walking towards the binding case, "I'm sorry Nui… But I can't just throw away someone's life for my hatred…"

"I DON'T CARE!" Nui screamed even louder, her words stopping Ryūko, who then looked up at her in surprise as Nui continued, "Do you hear me! That's right I don't care! I'm the most selfish girl in the world! I don't want to live if its Not without the other half of me!"

Clone Nui began pulling on the threads, blood spilled from where the threads connected to her as they seemed to pull out her flesh leaving red lines in her skin from where the threads came from.

True Nui was dumb struck as she spectated, "What the hell are you doing you idiot?! Are you trying to die?!"

Ryūko shouted to Nui as the operator looked on in surprise, "Stop it Nui! You'll kill yourself!"

Clone Nui's face was filled with ferocity, her determination and rage flowing through every word she uttered as she continued to pull at the threads on her body, more of her flesh ripping off and more blood spilling out, "I said I don't care! If I don't… I won't ever get to see her again! She's a part of me and I'm a part of her!"

The crimson threads began to radiate with energy, causing one of the servants to speak up to the operator worriedly "Sir! the life fibers energy signatures are growing stronger!"

The operator growled with frustration, "damn it! Did we underestimate her?!"

Ryūko noticed the operator's hand drifting towards the metal panel, she then dashed forwards grabbing his arm by the wrist. "Don't you dare…"

The operator raised his other arm wielding a red revolver and pointing it at Ryūko, however before he could react Ryūko raised one of her legs kicking the gun out of his hand before pulling the operator around so she was standing at his back with her arm across his neck. A great many servants were now pointing their rifles towards them both, Ryūko making use of her and the operator's position to turn him into a body shield.

Ryūko noticed a holster at his back pulling out a large Knife from him and holding it against his throat, the edge of the knife digging in slightly to the operator's neck drawing out a few drops of blood, "Take one move and this guys gonna be more than bleeding!"

"I know you don't have the heart within you to kill, Ryūko." The operator began struggling against Ryūko's hold, grabbing her arm with said arm buckling against the operator's pull.

Ryūko reacted with surprise at the sudden burst of strength, "What the hell?! Wait you… you're wearing life fibers!"

The operator replying with a simple cold demeanour, "Once again your observation skills are impeccable."

Ryūko smirked, "fine, if I won't slice you up, I'll do this instead!"

Ryūko took the operator by the cuff before moving him in front of her then flipping him over. She smacked him onto his head hard enough to make him bounce off the ground. Perhaps surprisingly he was alright albeit rather shocked at Ryūko's manoeuvre, His hat falling off to reveal short white white hair with flecks of red spread through out, all standing in spikes. Quickly within these moments, Ryūko noticed multiple grenades on his combat vest.

"Nice grenades! how about we blow the roof off this place!" She pulled the pins off the grenades within a single motion before Punching the operator sending him flying into the group of servants at the back of the warehouse.

"Get down!" The operator shouted to the servants dove onto the ground as he quickly removed his combat vest.

The operator chucked the vest onto the ceiling, and just as the vest made impact the grenades went off. The ceiling shattered at the impact sending the metal panels that made up the ceiling crashing down into the warehouse. Ryūko was already busy fighting, as she dashed around the room taking down servants as she went, grappling one flipping them over, and giving a one two punch to another, knocking them out before picking up a piece of metal from the collapsed ceiling and throwing it at one of the others. Meanwhile True Nui continued watching clone Nui in utter confusion and shock, Clone Nui continuing to struggle despite the pain that flowed through her body.

True Nui spoke out, her anger channelling from her confusion, "I don't understand… why? why do this for me? without me you can have a normal life! But you're throwing that away for me!? WHY?!"

Clone Nui seemed to hear these words, as she replied through teeth gritting from the pain, "I… I made a promise! So you are mine Nui! and I… I am yours! you ain't getting away from me so easily, we're one in the same!"

True Nui smiled Solemnly "I am yours and you are mine…" she suddenly grabbed the threads that stretched from the ceiling to the floor in her room, which began illuminating even brighter than before.

The operator recovered not too long after the grenades went off. He pulled out a different red gun than before, this one being a more conventional combat pistol. He attempted to aim at Ryūko who had taken down many of the servants only for her to notice him pointing the gun in her direction. However both Ryūko's and the operator's attention was drawn to the chamber clone Nui resided in. The threads had retracted into her body and Nui seemed to float in the air. A great many crimson threads then burst out from her, filling the chamber with swirling fibers acting like a tornado. A strange face made of the life fibers appeared at the glass, it's gnawing jagged

teeth and single left eye glowed with a vibrant red before the colour began to change to purple. The face roared which seemed to cause the glass to shatter and the threads began to close into a single point before revealing True Nui standing on the floor of the chamber confidently.

She stepped forward and kicked down the binding case, before standing on it's back, "Hellooooooo sorry to keep you waiting!"

The operator looked on at True Nui, his voice monotone yet unveiling the essence of disappointment, "It seems we're out of time…"

Nui smiled joyfully as she unveiled one of her life fiber claws wielding it with sinister intent, "Out of time? don't be silly! Our fun's just getting started! I'm gonna pay you back for embarrassing me~"

The operator pulled out what appeared to be a trigger device from his coat pocket, "Maybe some other time…"

Ryūko looked on in shock as Nui appeared to be merely curious throwing out an "oh?"

The operator activated the trigger, setting off a large explosion that collapsed the entirety of the warehouse.

Ryūko and True Nui recovered within the rubble of the warehouse, Ryūko looked around however not a single servant of the threads was in sight as they appeared to use the explosion as a plan to escape.

"Hey Nui! You alive?" Ryūko shouted out.

Nui then immediately jumped up wiping a bit of dirt from her dress, "Of course I am, no way a puny explosion like that could damage me."

Ryūko did a condescending high pitched imitation of Nui's voice to mock her, " *yes I am Ryūko, thanks for worrying about me, I'm glad*

you're alright too "

Nui crossed her arms casually as she responded, "Oh please, even if I did say something like that you wouldn't care now would you?"

Ryūko nodded unable to disagree with her logic, "yeah you got a point there."

Nui was about to march off before Ryūko spoke up again, "Hey Nui, do you know? About the situation?"

Nui casually responded "The whole I die either way but Clone Nui lives if you turn yourself in?"

Ryūko looked away solemnly, "yeah… I want you to know I was fine… letting you die."

Without skipping a beat True Nui replied, "well of course you were! Its not like I can exactly blame you for that, I would be fine dying if not for that other me… Oh! speak of the devil! This should be interesting…"

Ryūko threw out a confused "huh?"

Suddenly red threads quickly surrounded True Nui before disappearing and revealing clone Nui unharmed and completely nude.

Clone Nui without thinking immediately ran up and hugged Ryūko, "I'm so sorry Ryūko! I hate how you got caught up in all of this, are you alright!?"

Ryūko's face was a bright red as the naked Nui continued to hug her, "Er… y-yeah…"

Nui noticed her embarrassment causing her to look down, "oh crap I'm still naked!"

She jumped backwards completely flustered and desperately trying to cover her chest and private parts with her hands, "Please forgive me Ryūko! I'm too much of an impure maiden for your kindness!"

Ryūko looked incredibly confused, when suddenly a blanket fell on Nui's head.

"Nothing impure about being nude Nui, and hell you look pretty good naked." Mikisugi stepped over the rubble of the collapsed warehouse, as he approached the two girls.

A mix of police cars and nudist beach vehicles could be seen partially off in the distance just outside the warehouse yard.

Nui had the blanket wrapped around her chest as it draped around her legs.

Ryūko greeted him casually, "Yo, about time that back up showed up."

Mikisugi shrugged "Well you wanted us to stay away, and we need some distance so they wouldn't spot us, that's exactly what we did."

Suddenly two individuals ran up to the group, it was Mako and Satsuki.

Mako immediately hugged Ryūko while Satsuki gently placed her hand on Ryūko's cheek calmly speaking to her, "Are you alright? I was so worried…"

Ryūko placed her hand on Satsuki's hand, "yeah I'm alright… thank you sis."

Satsuki turned to Nui who audibly gulped as Satsuki's eyes turned to her. The tension climbed higher as Nui expected the worst. Satsuki stepped forwards and beyond Nui's expectations, Satsuki wrapped her arms around her in a warm embrace. Nui blushed as everyone else watched in shock.

Satsuki spoke quietly and softly, "Thank you Nui… for seeing my sister to safety, I'm glad you are alright as well…"

Nui was flustered as she could only utter, " Satsuki…"

Satsuki let go quietly before speaking up once again, "I too have had blood on my hands, and I was terrified when I saw you, that my past sins were creeping up on me… coming to damn this life I wished for, coming to corrupt and tear away everything I love… I didn't consider that you felt the same, I'm sorry Nui…"

Clone Nui continued her flustered state, throwing her arms in front her, "No it's alright! After everything that happened… Its ok, really."

Satsuki smiled warmly before nodding, "Again, thank you Nui."

Mikisugi cleared his throat awkwardly before speaking up, "I know you two would probably like some time to recover from such an awful experience, but I need to ask you about some details regarding who attacked you."

Nui and Ryūko looked towards Mikisugi.

Nui spoke up immediately, "The leader of this scheme, he called himself the operator, while he said he works for a group called the servants of the thread."

Mikisugi seemed to enter contemplation upon hearing this, "the servants of the thread…"

Ryūko then started speaking in Nui's stead, "They claimed to have weapons effective against life fibers, and this operator guy… He was wearing something akin to a goku uniform."

Her claim filled the air with shock.

Mikisugi replied, the worry spread across his face, "for real? Jesus… who the hell are we dealing with… what else?"

However his question was met with the shaking of Nui's and Ryūko's head.

Mikisugi nodded his head with understanding, "I see… well you guys gotta be tired, perhaps its best that Nui comes to Nudist beach HQ…"

Satsuki spoke up, "Actually… I have an idea, how about Nui spends the night at my house?"

Surprise once again sprung from everyone's faces, including Ryūko and Nui.

Mikisugi took the idea under consideration, "Are you sure that's a good idea?"

Satsuki explained calmly, "The enemy is unlikely to attack once again so quickly, especially after being unable to eliminate their targets within this operation, but this will be even less likely with all of us in the same place. And I am sure that Nui would prefer the comfort of our house than she would in Nudist beach HQ."

Mikisugi once again nodded to Satsuki's sound logic, "I guess that makes sense, and you're ok with this Nui?"

Clone Nui replied worriedly, "I guess that would be alright."

She began to shiver suddenly as a true Nui made of blood appeared reaching out of clone Nui's body, "ooooo sounds like fun!"

The blood clone disappeared causing clone Nui began to speak dizzily, "I guess that's her seal of approval… but I don't think it should be up to me…"

Clone Nui looked at Ryūko causing the others to join as well.

Ryūko took a moment to think before answering, "… Alright, she can stay over."

A sigh of relief was audible before Mako gasped excitedly, "Wait… IS THIS A SLEEP OVER?"

Satsuki awkwardly replied, "I-I suppose so…"

Mako continued in her excitement, "Can I come?!"

Ryūko smiled casually with a quick reply, "Sure, I don't see why not."

Mako's excitement changed to pure joy, "yaaaaaaay! But oh my gosh! we need to get marsh mellows, PJ's, movies *maybe the adult kind*, teddy bears, curry, watermelons, toys, tooth paste, tooth brushes, my diaries…"

Mako continued rambling in the background while Mikisugi gestured to their left, "shall we go?" The others agreed except for Mako who paid absolutely no attention, they followed Mikisugi with Ryūko pulling Mako along like she was carrying along a statue.

"Alright who wants to get in front with me?" Mikisugi had his car's doors wide open inviting the girls in however none of them wished to sit in the front of the vehicle.

There were only three seats in the back however, so it ended up with Ryūko sitting on the left side, Mako sitting in the middle, and Satsuki sitting on the right side, and Nui for whatever reason sitting on Satsuki's lap, of course true Nui watched smugly amused, her torso phasing through the car's back window. Clone Nui blushed heavily, seemingly troubled by the strange situation.

Satsuki was oblivious to Nui's embarrassment, "Is something wrong Nui?"

However Nui did not know how to answer, "E-er n-no it-"

Satsuki interrupted in perceived understanding, "Ah I see, you're worried about not wearing a seat belt, don't worry this will help."

Satsuki held her arms around Nui causing her blush to deepen as if she was about to burn. Ryūko and Mako appeared to spend their time skipping through a magazine for men's swim wear they seemed to find on the car floor, blushing harder with each page turned.

The group arrived back at Satsuki's house, Soroi greeting them at the door. Mikisugi appearing irritated as he pulled out several items out of the car's boot suggesting they made several stops before arriving, likely at the behest of Mako. After Mikisugi and the girls made themselves at home, they began doing a number of activities, Nui for the first time got to taste Soroi's tea, her eye lighting up as she took a sip and a tear rolling down her face.

"Thats… amazing…" she said as each of the others smiled, even Ryūko who had grown accustomed to clone Nui's presence.

They partook in several other activities, from Jenga to charades to watching several dubious movies.

The night was old and the group collectively decided to head to sleep, however Mako spoke up, "Can we all sleep in the same room!?"

Ryūko and Satsuki was taken aback for a moment as the question brought up an awkward situation.

Ryūko would be the first to attempt a gentle refusal, "But Mako all the rooms only got one bed."

Mako not seeing the issue responds with a simple: "so?"

Satsuki is the next to try to get through to her, "Mako can you see how that could be a bit…"

Nui responded in Mako's stead, "It's alright."

Ryūko threw out a confused "huh?"

Nui continued in her explanation, "I'll just sleep on the floor."

Satsuki worriedly responds, "Nui I couldn't possibly ask you to do that."

Nui trying to calm Satsuki quickly replied, "Its alright Satsuki, I'll just use a futon! It will be fine. I'm quite acquainted to sleeping on futons"

Mako quietly cheered while Satsuki and Ryūko accepted Nui's proposal, and after having put on their PJ's, Nui forcing herself to look away as they got dressed. And having brushed their teeth the four drifted off to sleep within Satsuki's neat and serene bedroom. A few hours in and Clone Nui got up to gaze out at the night sky which began to spiral into a hue of blue as the sun began to rise.

"Can't sleep?" True Nui appeared by her right hand side.

Clone Nui who had got used to true Nui randomly appearing replied calmly, "you too huh?"

A few moments of silence passed before True Nui asked the pertinent question on her mind, "So why? why did you do it? You could of been free of me, but you decided to rip your body to shreds just to save me, why?"

Clone Nui took a moment before answering, "We can be better… I saved you because… we can be better, both you and I…"

True Nui responded, seemingly irritated, "better? How can I be better? I'm already perfect!"

Clone Nui responded quietly, "you don't believe that, I know you don't, I've seen your insecurities, but you don't understand what kind of better we need to be, all the time you've spent warped in your beliefs… It hurts to think about it Nui."

True Nui was silent, unable to answer before simply uttering, "I guess I am tired after all."

She Then disappeared leaving Clone Nui to stand there alone as the sun began to rise, "I'm sorry Nui, I'll make it up to you… I promise…"

Satsuki's eyes opened for a moment looking in Nui's direction before closing again like they never opened at all.

A spot light switches on to reveal the operator standing in an unknown room, he speaks out saying, "forgive me, Mr CEO I've failed to secure either of the targets…"

Another voice from within the room originated from an unseen point, the voice of a man calm and suave, oozing charisma as he replied, "Hm I see, Your gambit was a failure… this is very unlike you operator."

The operator knowing there would be no excuses simply said, "I know sir…"

The unseen voice chimed in again, free of malice, simply calm and analytical, "No worries, this is simple a testament to the difficult nature of those we are targeting, next time we shall be more prepared. In the mean time we can continue to fulfil our true objective… For the will of Ragyō…"

Talk of threads

A single red line. A single thread in an endless void. The void began to fill with stars. The stars began galaxies, endlessly spiralling into the infinite. The thread approached the galaxies, light bending as it stretched across the universe. As it entered the galaxies, Stars and planets passed it by, with every incandescent orb it approached, another crimson thread sprung from them before joining the line who journeyed through the stars. More and more threads joined it as it pushed on more and more. The thread exploded forming countless radiant crimson and yellow eyes they eyes stretched out forming two larger red eyes and teeth.

The teeth began to open as a voice echoed out, "I breathe with the breath of a thousand worlds… And I WANT MORE."

Clone Nui woke up in the futon across the room from the bed Satsuki, Mako and Ryūko were on. Nui rubbed her eyes before looking over to see Ryūko rise as well from the bed to a sitting position.

"O-oh Ryūko!" Nui exclaimed.

Ryūko raised her finger to her mouth to shush her.

"Oh right, sorry… wait shouldn't we wake them? its almost time for school" Nui quickly lowered her voice to an awkward whisper.

Ryūko answered seemingly half asleep, "It's fine Mikisugi told me before he left that we shouldn't go to school today…"

Nui accepts this worriedly looking down while she messed with her fingers, "Oh ok… I hope this doesn't affect my grades too much…" she then looked back at Ryūko who looked somewhat troubled sparking Nui's attention causing her to question Ryūko tentatively, "A-are you ok?"

Ryūko pinched the space between her eyes as she answered, "Yeah I… just had a weird dream…"

Nui looked surprised for a moment, "wait what kind of dream?"

Ryūko responded in the same out-of-it demeanour, "Er some red line going through space or something…"

Nui replies with a sudden realisation, "… And a face right? talking about a thousand worlds…"

Ryūko then reflected Nui's surprise now looking directly at her, "y-yeah, how did you know that?"

Nui's face was lost in contemplation as she struggled to comprehend what was happening, "I had that dream too…"

Ryūko showed quiet surprise, "For real? That's… weird…"

The two became silent in their confusion.

"Its because of the life fibers!" True Nui suddenly appeared exclaiming in her blood form, surprising Ryūko while Clone Nui shook from the sudden rush of blood leaving her body too heavily to respond.

"N-N-Nu…" Clone Nui tried to speak but stuttered through the first word.

The blood true Nui retracted into clone Nui's body causing her to cease shaking releasing a sigh of release.

"Damn it Nui I told you to warn me before doing that." Clone Nui chastised true Nui who merely responded by sticking her tongue out.

"Wait what did she mean by it being to do with the life fibers?" Ryūko questioned clone Nui worriedly.

Clone Nui was quickly surrounded by crimson threads before the threads disappeared revealing true Nui, "I mean it was a message sent through the life fibers, a strong one at that…"

Ryūko pressed onward, clone Nui paying close attention floating by True Nui's side "A message? From who?"

True Nui replied with an joyful smile, "From the mother thread of course!"

Mako tossed and turned in her sleep, as Ryūko and clone Nui expected the volume of true Nui's announcement to disturb her's and Satsuki's sleep.

"Maybe we should do this somewhere else…" Ryūko uttered causing the the two to walk down stairs, Nui walking in front of Ryūko.

Nui looked around curiously as she walked, casually tilting each painting she came across while Ryūko wordlessly un-tilted each of the paintings. They made their way into the dining room and sat down at both sides of the dining table.

Soon after, Soroi entered the room, "Oh Ryūko and… miss Harime?" He seemed confused to see Nui in the form of the grand couturier, "Ryūko are you sure its alright for her to…?"

Ryūko nodded calmly to ease Soroi's worries, "yeah its alright."

Soroi calmly replied "I see… I'll make you two some tea."

He then made his way out of the room.

"Oh that's nice, I was always curious about why Satsuki like that tea so much, now I get to find out."

Ryūko went back to business as she replied, "Alright explain what you meant, what's the mother thread?"

Nui seemed to stare at Ryūko lovingly, "you know Ryūko you have just the most beautiful of eyes…"

Nui's compliment only served to irritate Ryūko who crossed her arms in her anger, "Nui…"

Nui relented throwing her arms up, "alright alright! I'll tell you, jeeze…" Nui continued in a more straight forward explanation, "All I know is what Ragyō told me, the mother thread is the original life fiber of all life fibers, and that sometimes it sends thoughts through the other life fibers and that's what the dreams are."

Ryūko voices an observation, "So you've had the dreams too?"

True Nui nodded casually, "Oh I've had plenty of these "dreams" none of them like this one though… To be honest I didn't think we were in the mother thread's reach anymore now that the primordial life fiber is gone…"

Soroi gently placed cups in front of them before pouring in tea, "Thanks Soroi." Ryūko spoke softly to Soroi after he filled her cup.

The butler then moved to Nui's cup who replied to Soroi's actions with her usual smug smiling demeanour, "Thank you Soroi"

Ryūko took a sip before she continued questioning, "so… What do the dreams mean?"

Nui shrugged casually, "No idea, I even asked Ragyō, but she just told me not to ever question the mother thread, but I think she didn't know either."

Ryūko seemed to grow intensely anxious, "And… what can this mother thread do to us…?" However her question was interrupted as it seemed that Satsuki was at the dining room door.

Both Ryūko and Nui were taken off guard, Ryūko more so with a conventional surprised reaction, however Nui appeared simply

playfully bemused.

"Oh er hey Satsuki!" Ryūko replied to Satsuki's sudden appearance.

Satsuki simply looked at true Nui with a cold demeanour, "Why is true Nui here and not clone Nui?"

The panic was noticeable on Ryūko's face however Nui seemed casual and joyful, "well we-"

Suddenly she was interrupted by Ryūko, "Er she really wanted to try Soroi's tea!"

Satsuki raised an eyebrow as Nui looked towards Ryūko in confusion before turning back to Satsuki going along with it. "Y-yeah! I always wanted to know why you liked his tea so much, and yeah its not bad."

Satsuki seemed to accept this, "I see… However, Clone Nui should be here not you, go back."

True Nui sighed, "alright alright, I can see when I'm not wanted."

Ryūko looked awkwardly confused in response "That doesn't fit your character at all…"

True Nui then stood up before life fibers surrounded her for a moment, before disappearing revealing clone Nui now sitting where true Nui was, "I'm sorry about that Satsuki…"

Satsuki's demeanour seemed to change to a much more calm and warm outset, "Its alright Nui, but do consider that we are under constant surveillance by Nudist beach and letting Her out to do as she pleases may cause them to grow antsy."

Nui seemed troubled but she returned Satsuki's warmth with understanding, "yeah you're right…"

All of a sudden Mako arrived in the room as joyous as ever, "good moooorning everyone!" Her arrival bringing smiles all round.

"Hey Mako how did you sleep?" Ryūko asked.

Mako replied with a flourish, "Like a baby! the pillows were so soft!"

Satsuki nodded warmly, "My bed does have nice pillows."

Mako was quick to reply, "oh right, the bed had pillows too."

A moment of silence followed before Nui broke it, "well… its about time I should get going…"

Her declaration causing Mako to moan in disappointment, "huh!? But I just got up…"

Satsuki chiming in calmly, "Are you sure you don't want to stay for a while?"

Nui waved her hand in refutation, "No its alright, you three deserve this day… and besides its best for me to head back and get ready for school tomorrow."

Satsuki, Mako and Ryūko watched as Nui quietly made her way from the table and up stairs, as she put on her clothes and walked out of the house, Mako cheerfully waving to her as she left.

Nui wandered her way from Satsuki's house, stepping through sun-soaked streets, taking moments to stare at the sun peeking it's way through a tree's leaves. She stepped into another street when she was suddenly surrounded from front to back by Nudist beach agents.

Mikisugi stepping out in front of one of the groups of surrounding agents, "Good morning."

Nui was surprised at the sudden ambushed, "Oh I-"

Mikisugi waved his hand to put out any worries, "Don't worry you're not in trouble."

Nui appeared to grow calm after hearing this as Mikisugi continued, "We would just like to ask you a few questions, think of it as a debriefing."

Nui took a noticeable gulp. As she began to follow the agents out of the street. It wasn't long before Nui found herself sitting on a seat in front of a blackboard.

Mikisugi stood in front wearing a lab coat over his Nudist beach gear holding a stick, "Don't think you could you could get out of school that easy."

Nui tried to speak up with "actually I-"

However she was interrupted by Mikisugi who now pointed the stick at Nui, "Wasn't talking to you, can true Nui come out please!?"

Life fibers surrounded clone Nui disappearing for true Nui to take her place, "heeeeere~" Nui comically raised her hand as she called out playfully.

Mikisugi seemed to play along with a bemused expression, "Excellent attendance!"

Tsumugu was just outside the room, listening in by the door disgruntled, "Christ this is dumb…"

Mikisugi continued with a showman like flair, "So… you must be wondering what kind of questions I could have for you after such a heavy event."

Nui raised her hand again playfully, "Oh me! me! I know this one! You wanna learn more about the mother thread right!?"

Mikisugi looked confused for a moment, "Mother thread?"

Nui was quick to reply in her usual casual demeanour, "Don't play dumb with me Mikisugi, we both know you got both me and well… other me bugged up the wazoo. Although I am interested to know where the ones on clone Nui are stashed…"

Clone Nui appeared floating by her side watching in extreme discomfort.

Mikisugi shrugged with a defeated smile, "Alright alright you got me, but no this isn't about the mother thread, but since while we're on the topic, this mother thread of yours, how dangerous is it?"

Nui leaned back on her chair, "Well given it has the capacity to assimilate entire planets just by touching down on said planet's surface, I would say extremely."

Mikisugi face seemed lost in awkward worry, "I-I see… well the reason you're here is actually…"

Mikisugi was tapping the keys on a laptop from a nearby desk as he talked only to stop his own sentence as he noticed Nui passing a note to one of her doppelgangers, only to snap back to looking at Mikisugi once she realised he noticed.

He cleared his throat and continued, "Like I was saying… The reason is for this."

The blackboard seemed to change into an electronic screen which appeared to display an image of the life fiber entity in America.

Nui audibly "ooooo'd" as she leaned forward in her chair almost causing herself to fall, only to grasp the seat of the chair some how flipping both it and her into the air before landing back on the chair's feet.

"You can stand up you know?" Mikisugi looked at her in awkward confusion as she got up from the seat and approached the screen, "This is the specimen we recovered two days ago during our mission

in America its being held by our newly established branch in America along with the American government, I figured you could provide us some insight on it."

Nui looked amazed at the image, "Oh my… this is incredible! I've never seen anything like it!"

Mikisugi questioned calmly, "So you don't know anything about this?"

Nui placed her hand to her chin in contemplation, "I might be able to tell you something if I could see it in person."

Mikisugi tapped a few more keys on the laptop before replying, "well I can't make that happen but I can do this…"

A few more images appeared on the screen. The images revealed the entity in several states of dissection, It's body cut open the threads in several states of disarray.

Mikisugi looked at the images a stern mature expression now on his face, "As you can see after we captured the entity we carried out an autopsy, we didn't fully sever the threads so we're leaving it to regenerate a newly built facility in America."

"Hold on… No way… It can't be!" Suddenly Nui exclaimed as she saw one of the images.

The image depicted the chest of the entity cut open revealing an orb in it's center partially formed.

Mikisugi explained as he outlined the area that he thought Nui was looking at, "The highest energy signature was detected in that orb, we thought it might be some kind of Banshi."

Nui's face was filled with wonder as she stared into the image, "This… this isn't just a Banshi, this is a Banshi tie, a thread core!"

Mikisugi was rather confused looking at the image, "A thread what?"

Nui continued, "Well think back to the primordial fiber, it had a orb like Banshi you needed to cut to destroy it right? Its like that!"

Mikisugi's eyes widen as he began to understand, "wait… you mean…"

Nui nodded, "Yup! some way, some how, Life fibers are trying to form a new life fiber cocoon! they are gathering in a desperate attempt to survive on a planet with no primordial fiber!"

Mikisugi raised his voice in return, "How is that possible!?"

Nui shrugged, "Not sure, some sort of outlying factor perhaps? or maybe an evolutionary change that circulated for a few thousand years."

Mikisugi's confusion returns as he continued to question, "few thousand years? that's not enough time for something to evolve we would be talking millions at least."

Nui shook her head in derision, "Oh you silly humans, you act like experts but you still know barely anything about life fibers. You would be correct if we were talking about a normal creature, but the life fibers are fundamentally different, the energy we use to evolve other species is merely a fraction of our own energy, while they evolve, we evolve too at an accelerated rate. The energy we use to evolve is taken from countless species across the universe and spread through fibers via the collective consciousness. That is why we continuously devour species after species, so we can change and evolve at an accelerated rate. Millions of years for you, thousands of years for us."

Mikisugi contemplated this extravagant amount of information, "I see… But if you cultivate the evolution of other species so you can leech off them, wouldn't it take you as long as them to evolve?"

Nui again went on to explain, "Well that would be the case if we only cultivated one species at a time, but the life fibers are constantly

cultivating many planets across the stars, accelerating the evolution of other species so they can make those species' genetic data form their own changes before devouring them, taking their evolutionary energy and using it to expand our own, accelerating the evolutionary process."

Mikisugi replied seemingly somewhat overwhelmed, "I see… so to put it simply, they are using other's change, to change faster."

Nui nodded joyfully, "Yup!"

Mikisugi then became lost in thought, "Could this specific change of forming thread cores also be connected to the Servants of the thread?"

Nui once again shrugged playfully, "Who knows? you can work that one out, any further questions can't top the ones you already asked, so it would be pretty boring."

Nui began waltzing her way out of the room when Mikisugi turned around to speak to her before she left, "Nui" just at the door, Nui turned to Mikisugi who simply said, "Thank you."

Nui turned back to the door, "your gratitude is wasted on me naked ape, I'm merely doing this because I just don't care anymore."

Mikisugi spoke out again, "That's not what I see… not at all."

However Nui leaves without answering, followed by guards as she walked down the corridor, Tsumugu looking at her in disdain. After true Nui had left the HQ clone Nui took back control, mainly to calm the worries of the agents that followed them.

She made it part way down a street before speaking up to true Nui, "Do you really not care? Because the life fibers look down on you?"

True Nui was reluctant to speak leading to clone Nui's question being unanswered. True Nui lied back on her bed within the pocket

reality.

A sharp frown on her face as someone else's words echoed through her mind, *"Nui… You disappointed Ragyō and you disappoint your true mother…"*

Nui quietly uttered to herself, the pain audible in her voice, "I know… I know…"

A sudden complication

Nui awoke more refreshed than ever in her hotel room, the day after she had spent the morning at Satsuki's house. She sat up stretching her arms upwards while yawning.

She rubbed her eyes for a moment, as the realisation displayed across her face. "Its… School today!"

She jumped off her bed joyfully, before quickly stripping down and getting in the shower.

She took a few moments of washing in the shower before shouting out, "Nui stop peeping!"

True Nui pulled her head away from the door of the bathroom before responding, "Oh come on! I'm just looking at myself!"

Clone Nui replying with, "Still counts!"

Clone Nui got out of the shower before approaching the mirror and happily blow drying and brushing her hair then brushing her teeth. She wrapped a towel around her chest wearing it like a dress. She left the bathroom with true Nui floating outside by the door with an innocent smile only for clone Nui to look at her irritably. She then put on her school uniform styling her hair to look flowery and neat yet ironically chaotic. She entered the kitchen putting two pieces of bread in the toaster, when the toast popped she buttered them quickly and wolfing them down.

She checked her phone to see the time, "Oh crap! Its that late already!?"

She began running, realising she was gonna be late to school as she was only just getting close to the place where she kept her shoes in front of the door when suddenly, She froze.

Her body in mid running motion, true Nui looked at her confused, "Nui? you there?" She waved her hand in front of clone Nui's face "Hellooooooo? Disgusting ape filled planet to Nuuuuui?"

Red threads began to rise out clone Nui's skin wrapping around her when suddenly. She was replaced with true Nui standing there instead, true Nui looking inquisitively at her hands and body.

Clone Nui soon appeared floating next to her, "what the hell?!" She seemed even more confused while true Nui simply seemed curious.

"huh I didn't know you wanted me to take over." True Nui uttered

clone nui looked around worriedly "I didn't, and I… I can't take over!"

True Nui seemed relaxed like this was a small issue while clone Nui was obviously panicked.

"Really? Let me try." True Nui closed her eyes for a moment, squinting beneath her closed eyelids like she was focusing, yet nothing happened, "huh you're right, I can't switch over too, perhaps we should try contacting Nudist apes- I mean beach."

Clone Nui seemed to consider this notion for a moment before responding, "They'll probably tell me to take another day off school…"

True Nui again seeming untroubled responded with a simple, "so?"

But her nonchalant response only served to worry clone Nui, "If I keep taking days off school then there's no way my grades can keep up! I'm gonna have to go through day after day of agonising notes… and the exams… THE EXAMS!"

True Nui replied calmly as ever, "you know not being able to take control is an emergency right?"

However clone Nui to screamed back, "SO IS THIS!"

True Nui gestured consolingly, "Alright relax, relax, if you are so dead set on going to school, then you only have the one option… Let me go to school for you!"

These words sent clone Nui dizzy as all she could respond with is a confused, "Huh?"

True Nui dressed up in a spare uniform practically in an instant. She presented herself proudly in front of the panicked clone Nui, "Tadaaa~"

The worries were present on clone Nui's face as her response was shakily put together, "You realise Satsuki and Ryūko are gonna go crazy once they see you right?! And besides did you even take a shower…?"

True Nui casually made her way around the apartment picking an apple from the fruit bowl in the kitchen, taking a crunch out of it as clone Nui spoke before responding, "Oh relax, if I'm unable to wash for a period of time, like if I'm on an assassination mission that takes several days of staking out, I just use the life fibers in my body to eat any dirt that touches my skin, and I also mastered the art of always smelling like marshmallows." This seemed to confuse clone Nui for a moment before True Nui continued, "And when it comes to Satsuki and Ryūko, you can just tell them the same thing you told me! I'm sure they'll understand."

Clone Nui was quick to continue the back and forth, "And what about Nudist beach?!"

True Nui started looking irritated, "Nui, I don't like repeating myself."

Clone Nui gestured with both of her hands pushing out at Nui, exasperated at the situation. "Ok… ok… lets say they do accept that as a viable excuse, who's to say we don't gather attention from the other students!?"

True Nui responded pride-fully, "Simple! I'll just be discrete! I'm pretty good at that you should know it to be so."

Clone Nui chewed on her thumb's nail with anxiety, "This is still a really bad idea…"

True Nui started looking fed up at clone Nui's indecisiveness, "Look other me, if you really REALLY want to go to school today, then you don't have any other choice."

Clone Nui grit her teeth with frustration, "Alright! You can go… But you better not embarrass me! Although, there's no way we can walk out of here without being stopped by the Nudist beach agents down stairs…"

True Nui then proceeded to walk over to the window.

The Nudist beach sniper watching sees her, chiming in through his communications, "Attention Attention, True Nui is in control I repeat, True Nui is in control! prep the kill switch!"

True Nui calmly opened the window, much to clone Nui's confusion, "Who said anything about walking?" True Nui uttered smugly before Leaping out of the window.

The strength her jump shaking the glass to almost shattering. Nui pulling out her parasol mid air and gliding in the wind.

School was about to start as Mako, Ryūko and Satsuki was making their way into school. They were somewhat surprised to not have seen Nui, the slightest essence of worry coming across from their faces however nonetheless they made their way calmly to class. They climbed up the stairs, the usual students playing card games on the large window sill.

"Just another day huh… Like nothing ever happened, feels weirdly nice." Ryūko casually spectated as the approached the top of the stairs.

"Indeed, every time something strange occurs I worry that the comfort of the everyday becomes lost to us." Satsuki replied eloquently causing Ryūko to shoot her a look of warm concern.

They approached their class door down the corridor when Ryūko's phone began ringing, she pulled it up, Satsuki speaking up as she does, "who is it?"

Ryūko responding while still looking at the phone, "Its Mikisugi." She then selected the answer call icon while Satsuki looked on in concern, "Yo Mikisugi, what is it?"

She received a quick reply from Mikisugi who seemed to speak urgently, "Nui's gone rogue."

Ryūko's face turned to worry as soon as she heard this asking, "what?!"

Mikisugi ignored the question continuing with, "True Nui took over and left the hotel room, we have the kill switch ready but I wanted to get your help to find her before we did anything."

As Mikisugi spoke Ryūko opened the class door. Both hers and Satsuki's jaw hit the floor as they saw true Nui waving at them from the back of the class, while Mako obliviously waved back with her usual joyful demeanour. Ryūko and Satsuki immediately pulled Nui out of the class room taking her to an secluded part of the corridor while Mako simply followed inquisitively.

"What the hell are you doing Nui?!" Ryūko exclaimed.

A blood version of clone Nui to appear from true Nui's body. "W-wait, please allow us to explain!"

Ryūko put her index finger up gesturing to both Nuis to wait. She selected the speaker icon on her phone and held it out to them before forming a flat hand telling them to continue.

Mikisugi's voice came out from the phone, "Er… hello?"

True Nui responded casually, "Hello Mikisugi!"

The shock from Mikisugi was apparent as he replied, "N-Nui!? Where the hell are you?!"

True Nui responded just as casually as before, "At school."

Her calm demeanour serving to frustrate Mikisugi, "We were about to kill you! Why the hell did you jump out your god damn window!? And who is in control!?"

True Nui's tone in her reply seemed to attempt to calm Mikisugi, "Its alright I got an explanation for everything…"

Both Nuis began explaining the situation, the air of surprise and irritation was palpable as the current circumstances inconvenienced everyone involved.

"And despite that you still decided to go to school!?" Mikisugi asked in his frustration.

However clone Nui to perhaps surprisingly snap back, "I said I wanted to live a normal life, if I let crap like this and getting attack by a bunch of gas mask wearing weirdos stop me from doing every day things then I can't exactly do that now can I?!"

The unexpected out burst left the group in a moment of silence.

Satsuki tried to break the tension left in the scene, "I'm not sure if we should assume this is permanent however the reality is that we may have to expect this situation to occur more in the future."

True Nui raised her hand avidly, "Oooo we should give it a name! we usually love names for stuff like this right?"

The rest looked at her awkwardly as Ryūko replied, "So er… what were you thinking?"

True Nui placed her hand to her chin contemplating on the possible names, "well… My theory for why this is happening is that the pocket reality can only maintain each specific entity's existence in the dimension for a certain amount of time… I'm not sure why that is but if the theory is correct we should be able to switch back after a period of time. Soooooooo I think we should call it dimension fatigue!"

Mikisugi considered this calmly, "I guess that makes sense… However this issue leaves us in a precarious situation…"

Satsuki nodded just as calmly, "Indeed…"

True Nui looked around at all the group (except Mako of course) who were lost in thought before speaking up grabbing their attention, "Why does it have to be a problem?" Confused looks were sent her way as she began to continue, "Clone Nui can still go to school and I can get out of that room every once and a while, it was starting to get pretty boring in there."

Ryūko replied like she was spelling out the obvious, "well because its you Nui."

Satsuki chimed in "Whatever the case, I made the choice before to give in to Nui's desire for a normal life, to oppose the basic requirement of her going to school would be quite hypocritical of me so as long as true Nui doesn't do anything outrageous… we will have to allow her to attend school."

True Nui threw out a joyous "Yaaaaay!"

Ryūko sighed and clone Nui disappeared back into true Nui's body.

The group returned to class, when homeroom was just about to end.

The teacher shooting them angered glares as they sat down. "Nice of you four to join us, seems like you don't care about homeroom huh."

Nui chimed in from the back with a "Can confirm, I always found this the most boring part of the day, and I was just spectating!"

Followed by the sound of a part of Ryūko's deck snapping from her enraged grip.

"I… I would punish you but since you've been pretty alright so far I'm gonna let you off with a warning." The teacher uttered

Nui returned with, "Jeez are all human teachers such pansies?"

Ryūko hastily stood up immediately, "E-er sorry about that sir, she was saying before she was feeling a bit off today."

The teacher threw out a simple dismissive "Hm."

Ryūko sat back down looking at Satsuki incredibly frustrated

"This is gonna be a long day…" Satsuki uttered.

And indeed it was, each lesson that passed them by true Nui found someway to embarrass herself and clone Nui whilst also irritating the hell out of Satsuki and Ryūko. At one point she was passing notes posing as several different students pretending to be in love with one another. At another point she had managed to build an entire castle out what seemed to be a dozen decks of cards. Lunch time was excruciating enough as Nui utilised life fiber threads to steal food from the different members of the class when it reached close to the last lesson where start going on a rant about the school not having mandatory sewing classes. When the end of the day had come, Ryūko and Satsuki were obliterated mentally, watching each moment of Nui's antics drained them of their energy.

True Nui seemingly oblivious to the toll she has taken on them waltz forward in her familiar joyful outset, "Well that was surprisingly fun! No wonder you wanted to go to school so much!"

Clone Nui appeared floating by her side even more haggard looking than Satsuki and Ryūko, "for you maybe, for me? not exactly how I would describe your ridiculous goofing off…"

True Nui simply replying with, "oh then how did you find it?"

Clone Nui snapped back at her angrily, "Humiliating perhaps?!"

Nui was walking ahead of the group as they were making their way outside of the school gate.

"Hmmm, I'm up to have some fun…" True Nui uttered

Her words were much to exasperate clone Nui's concern, "Its starting to worry me that I'm beginning to be able to tell what you are thinking…"

Nui began walking the opposite way down the street the others were walking only for Ryūko to notice, "Nui, that ain't your way home…" her face as dead tired as before.

Nui responded nonchalantly, "I know, I'm just gonna go for a little walk."

Ryūko sighed as Satsuki pinched the bridge of her nose in frustration.

"You know what? I don't care, Nudist beach can deal with this, they can kill you at any time anyway, if they do just let me keep your head as a souvenir." Ryūko looked away in derision as she began walking down the street as Satsuki and Mako followed.

Nui making her way down the street with her usual casual smile on her face.

"Now… where should I go?" True Nui was lost in thought for a moment, "Oh I know! city center!" Nui leapt up into the sky once again, gliding with her parasol.

In the air she spotted a nice secluded alleyway in the middle of the city's commercial district. She floated daintily down into the alleyway, brushing herself off casually as she stepped towards the alleyway exit.

"Alright, we gotta set a few ground rules. One: No more stealing" clone Nui appeared by her side commanding her sternly.

"lame…" True Nui responded with disappointment.

Clone Nui continued, "Two: No being rude to anyone."

True Nui again replying, "Oh that ones an easy one, I'm never rude to anyone!"

Clone Nui continuing once more starting with a sarcastic tone, "Right… Anyway three: and this is the most important one; DO NOT hurt anyone."

True Nui had a serious reply to this however, answering with her own question, "And what if they hurt me first?"

Clone Nui hardened her gaze as she responded, "Most aren't capable of hurting you, and if they are… exception to the rule."

True Nui acted playfully in response to the sudden seriousness from clone Nui, "Ooooo I like it when you're scary…"

Nui made her way though the busy street the appearance of her large pigtails clearly grabbing the attentions of passer-by's.

Nui's first stop would be at a clothing store although it seemed she had no interest in stepping inside, merely stopping at the front to comment on the quality of the dresses on display, "Trash, mediocre, alright I guess, Oh that one is actually rather decent!"

She then made her way towards a café provoking a confused remark from clone Nui, "Nui what's the point in going to a café? you don't have any money."

True Nui responded smugly, "I don't but you do." pulling out clone Nui's purse

clone Nui replied with a downtrodden, "god damn it…"

True Nui began rummaging around her purse, "Nudist beach started giving you allowances right?"

Clone Nui's face was mixed with defeated worry as she replied, "Something tells me I'm not gonna have much left of it after today…"

True Nui pulled out several bills, approaching the counter, with a simple request, "I would like sweet things."

By the time she was done at the café she had consumed several muffins, multiple cookies and a slice of cheese cake along with a large hot chocolate. Nui wondered throughout the many twists and turns of the district carrying several shopping bags of the items she had purchased from shop to shop, much to clone Nui's chagrin. As she progressed from street to street, when she made it to a quiet more shady street.

Nui waltzed her way down the street carelessly, unimpressed by the grime and general shadiness of the street which appeared much darker than the previous busier streets. The dainty girl stood out like a sore thumb for the denizens of the street being shady men wearing long coats on street corners likely doing drug deals and the like, homeless men, scrounging the space they have on the street, and groups of hooligans hanging out in alley ways and around rundown buildings. One group in particular had a member who's eye was especially caught by Nui who was walking past the group. The member was a burly man with scars on his face and a silver tooth on his bottom jaw, likely from a fight, he had piercing eyes filled with unfiltered thoughts envisioning many acts of depravity.

He spoke up as Nui walked past, "hey little girl, what brings you to this side of town? how about you come round my place and we have a bit of fun?"

Nui merely ignored the man proceeding to carry on walking.

However the man was persistent, stepping forward, "Hey I'm talking to you!"

Nui stopped in her tracks, replying in her usual casual voice, "not interested, dummy."

The man placed his hand on her shoulder, "Come on baby, a night with me is one you would never forget."

Nui made her malice obvious immediately dropping all of her bags, "Remove your hand from my shoulder you pathetic disgusting scum, before I remove it for you."

The man's eyes widened as he begins to realise, "what did the fuck did you just say…?"

Nui continued, now bearing a twisted smile on her face, "I'm sorry did your primitive ape ears not understand my eloquent words? you putrid excuse for a waste of air."

The man's surprise turned to rage as he raises his fist for a punch, "You bitch!"

However Nui caught the man's fist, The man tried to pull away but he couldn't escape her grasp, the group from behind him watched in a mix of surprise and fear.

Nui began talking, her twisted smile growing wider as she unveiled her rage, "You know, I think this is what I hate the most about humans; you give them the tiniest most insignificant level of power, and suddenly they start believing they can do what ever they want!"

Nui began squeezing, the man shrieking in pain.

"Nui stop it!" Clone Nui yelled at true Nui fearfully, her eyes searching the background for Nudist beach agents ready to interfere.

True Nui began unveiling a claw, ready to skewer him.

"STOP IT NUI!" clone Nui screamed.

But true Nui seemed to ignore her, continuing to rant to the man, "But you know what I find convenient about humans like that? they are usually so weak, they are barely worth my time." Nui had let go of the man's hand as the skin returned to her claw before she picked up her many shopping bags. The man recoiled in the pain looking fearfully at Nui who simply walked away speaking in her usual playful demeanour, "time to go home."

Nui then stepped into an alleyway and leapt once again into the air gliding with her parasol on the wind.

A smile like the sun

True Nui had collapsed onto clone Nui's bed after she chucked the various bags of items all over the place.

"Well that wasn't nearly as fun as I had hoped it would be…" True Nui sighed staring up the ceiling.

Clone Nui appeared by her side, "Would you… no never mind…"

True Nui turned to her inquisitively, "what?"

Clone Nui looked down as she appeared troubled, "would you… have killed that man if I didn't tell you to stop?"

True Nui seemed to think about it for a moment averting her gaze back up to the ceiling, "Eh Nah."

Clone Nui was somewhat surprised at this answer, "wait really?"

True Nui nodded with her usual joyful smile, "Yup! Weaklings like that aren't worth the blood staining my dress."

Clone Nui looked confused as she contemplated this, her mind seemingly lost in memories as she uttered to herself. "But wait that's…"

Before clone Nui had the chance to finish her train of thought, red threads surrounded true Nui and the two swapped places, marking the end of the "dimension fatigue" period.

"Yes! finally, it seems you were right Nui." Clone Nui cheered in relief

True Nui casually floated beside her, "Seems so, I wonder when the next dimension fatigue will come, I feel like I've barely scratched the surface of the fun I can have."

Clone Nui looked awkwardly in her direction, "hopefully not for a while…"

A moment of peace passed before three loud knocks broke out from the hotel room door.

"hm?" Clone Nui looked curiously in it's direction. "Hey Nui you know the procedure right?"

True Nui switched places with her "Of course I do!" she then walked through the room.

True Nui approached the door unveiling one of her life fiber claws.

"wai-" Clone Nui tried to speak out however she was interrupted by true Nui quickly opening the door and preparing to attack those that stood at the entrance.

They were met with the sound of Mako yelling fearfully as she cowered before the door.

True Nui sighed with disappointment at the sight of the frightened Mako, "ugh why the heck is the bobble head here…?"

She quickly switched to clone Nui who instead of disappointment showed surprise confusion, "M-Mako?!"

Mako took a few deep breaths before replying with a struggled smile, "h-hey Nui…"

Nui calmly took Mako's hand as she responded leading her tentatively inside the hotel room, her face and tone expressing her guilt at the unfortunate scenario, "I'm sorry Mako… I tried to tell her to look through the peep hole before answering…"

Mako waved her hand dismissively, "oh its alright! I should of expected you guys to be on high alert."

Nui lead Mako to sit down on a nearby sofa as she sat next to her while responding, "By the way Mako, how did you find this place? I didn't tell Satsuki or Ryūko where I was staying."

Mako started looking rather proud as she replied, "Oh I have my ways…"

Mikisugi was relaxing in his apartment, he appeared to be on the phone, "Things alright over in America? Government ain't giving them too much trouble?"

He pauses for a moment for the other end to give their response, "cool cool."

Suddenly a few knocks interrupted his relaxed posture as he spoke back into his phone, "Alright you guys take care, drinks are on me tomorrow, yeah see ya."

He had hung up the phone as he made his way towards the door.

After opening it up he was immediately barraged by Mako and her sudden questions, "Can you tell me where Nui is staying!?"

Mikisugi computed the situation for a moment before replying with a brisk "no."

However Mako was persistent, "please?"

Mikisugi again saying "no."

Mako of course replying with, "pleeeeeaaasee?"

Mikisugi returns again with "no."

Mako continues pleading, "pleeeeeeeeeeaaaaaaaaasssseee?"

Mikisugi defiant again simply saying, "no."

Mako refused to relent,
"Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeaaaaaaaaasssssssseeeeeee?"

Mikisugi this time replying with, "Maybe."

The change of reply surprising Mako, "Really?!"

However Mikisugi's answer goes back to "no."

Mako begins puffing her cheeks and loudly humming in frustration at Mikisugi's continued refusal.

Mikisugi let at an exasperated sigh, before responding with, "Alright… fine…"

Mako back in the hotel room exclaims happily, "And that's how I found it!" as she had just finished recounting her efforts to locate Nui's residence.

"I… I see." Nui responded looking at Mako awkwardly, as she sympathised with the difficulties of Mikisugi.

She goes back on topic however continuing to question the joyful Mako, "Also Mako… Why did you even come here in the first place?"

Mako's smile turned to a hesitant frown, "Well I just thought that if you were stuck within the other Nui all day you could of been pretty lonely… also we didn't get to talk much during the sleep over…"

Nui looked troubled as she tentatively replied, "I… I didn't talk to you much on purpose…"

Mako's head turned to Nui as she seemed hurt by this, "o-oh I see… Its one of those times huh… I get it… I always have been trying too much to have friends…"

Nui's face changed to a mix of worry and guilt, "No no! Its not like that! The reason I didn't talk to you much is because of Ryūko…"

Mako's eyes perked up with relief but seemingly also confusion, "Ryūko?"

Nui nodded solemnly, "Yes, I'm the one that killed her father, I doubt she would want me to become close to her best friend let alone Satsuki, her sister…"

The scene went silent as Nui stared at the floor, her decisions was ruled by her guilt. However her head was raised as she began hearing Mako. She was crying, her tears falling like a tidal wave threatening to fill the hotel room turning it into an ocean floor.

"M-Mako? Are you alright?" Nui asked with concern causing Mako to wipe her face with her arms and snivel loudly and she appeared breath inwards with her nose while it was running heavily.

Mako replied the tears could be heard in her voice, "y-yeah its just… Its so sad! You did a bad thing but you want to be forgiven but don't believe you deserve to be forgiven…"

Nui clenched her fists as she replied through her pain, "I don't deserve to be forgiven Mako…"

Suddenly Mako slapped her hands onto Nui's shoulders, "That's not true! You did something really bad… But you were told it was alright right?! You were even told to do it and you thought it was ok! Like when Dad told me to steal from the cookie jar! If you realise what you did was wrong and say you're really really sorry then you definitely deserve to be forgiven!"

Nui was doubtful as she continued to try to refute Mako, "But its not just this Me Mako, its the other me too."

Mako continued without skipping a beat, "She can be forgiven too! She just needs more time!"

True Nui appeared by clone Nui's side commenting on Mako's statement in derision, "Ha, yeah right."

But clone Nui simply began to smile warmly, "Thank you Mako, I appreciate that…"

Mako revealed her own smile as she embraced Nui who blushed slightly before hugging her back.

Nui made Mako a cup of tea placing it on the kotatsu table situated in front of the sofa, before speaking up to ask her a question while she placed the cup, "So Mako would you like to stay for a while?"

Mako joyfully replied in her usual oblivious nature, "Sure! I guess? I mean I already told my parents I could be staying out all night."

Nui looked rather surprised at this, "wait what?"

Mako nodded not seeing the reason for Nui's surprise, "yup!"

Nui began to blush hard as she stuttered through another question, "W-well… would you… like to have another sleep over?"

Mako fell silent as she was comprehending the response, "HUUUUUUUUH!? REALLY?!"

Nui merely nodded, as Mako spoke up, too ecstatic to let Nui articulate a full response, "But I didn't bring any PJs!"

Nui calmly responded with a soft smile, "you can use a spare pair of mine."

Mako began hyperventilating as she responded loudly, "I… I would love too!"

Nui had gotten dressed into her pyjamas, as Mako was wearing a matching pair.

"Its… awfully tight…" Mako struggled to fit into the pyjamas, which seemed to extenuate her curves, Nui blushing and watching with envy.

The two girls sat beneath the kotatsu table for a few moments, the awkwardness setting in.

Nui spoke up asking in desperation, "So er… what did you want to do?"

Mako seemed lost in thought, "Hmmmm… charades?"

Nui replied cheerfully, "Sure that sounds fun!"

The two girls went on to play charades with Mako starting out by making peculiar shapes with her body, such as large circles, and "Egyptian walk" while at other moments making motions such as rowing or cheering, much to the confusion of Nui. They sat back underneath the kotatsu, remarkably unfulfilled by their game of charades.

"Maybe this was a bad idea…" Nui uttered self consciously.

Mako raised her voice slightly trying to cheer Nui up, "Don't be like that! I'm sure there's

something fun we could do!"

Nui considered possibilities for a moment. Suddenly she seemed to have an epiphany before heading over to the bed pulling out a text book from the bedside table.

"Huh? whats that?" Mako asked, her curiosity beginning to pique.

"Oh its my "stuff I want to do" book." Nui answered as she flicked through the pages of the text book.

"You have a "stuff you want to do" book?" Mako continued to ask inquisitively.

Nui nodded, "yeah, I found myself lost with not much memory of doing well… anything, so I started drawing up a list of what I wanted to do…"

Mako's eyes brightened up, "That's so cute! And so er what kinda stuff you got in there?"

Nui blushed slightly as she began reading through the pages, "Er well… go cloud watching, drink smoothies, see a horror movie, struggle to go to sleep after seeing said horror movie… ooo here's one! Touch a frog."

Mako seemed somewhat confused but supportive, "Touch a frog? sounds… interesting? although I'm not sure if we can do that tonight, BUT we could watch a horror movie!"

Clone Nui seemed to jump fearfully at the very notion. "A-a horror movie? W-what were you thinking?"

True Nui appeared floating by her side shouting, "How about night of the living thread! A classic made by REVOCS' film division!"

Clone Nui looking at her stunned at the suggestion, "Does that actually exist?"

However their musings was interrupted By Mako, "How about this?"

She was holding up a DVD case that Nui read out the title in response, "the awakening?"

Mako happily nodded in response, "Mhm!"

Nui was sceptical at the DVD's sudden arrival, "Wait why do you have that on you?"

However Mako merely answered with "No reason! So do you want to watch it? or do you want to watch it!?"

Nui shrugged her shoulders, "I guess that would be alright…"

Clone Nui would spend the next two hours cowering in fear and shuddering at the twists and turns of this "The awakening" with every jump scare she hugged Mako who seemed to enjoy the film casually

as she munched on popcorn. True Nui watched as well although she seemed incredibly bored.

The two girls went to sleep, within the same bed, as per Mako's request. Nui deciding to lie the opposite direction of Mako. She rustled in her bed as she struggled to sleep, "Hey Mako… do you really think I could be forgiven…?" Nui turned to Mako who was deep asleep snoring cutely with her mouth wide open. "When you smile… it becomes so bright… your smile seems to burn all the sadness away…" Clone Nui smiled softly, "I wish I could of met you earlier in my life Mako…"

True Nui watched the exchange quietly, "what a foolish girl…"

Her first mission

The two girls were lying on the bed within the sun soaked hotel room. Nui was the one to awaken first, rubbing her eye as she sat up and looked down to her side to see Mako softly breathing as she snuggled beneath the warm Duvet. Nui smiled softly before stepping off the bed and raising her hand to her mouth as she yawned cutely. She walked over to the kitchen grabbing a glass out of one of the upper cabinets and a carton of orange juice from another before pouring the juice into the glass. She was about to start drinking when suddenly, someone kicks her door open. The glass flew out of Nui's hand as she was startled by the sudden entry, she struggles to catch it mid air although she seems to miss causing it to spill the juice all over the small kitchen floor.

"Yo" a gruff man's voice emanated from the door to the room.

Nui turned around to face that direction however she slipped on the orange juice sending her cascading down onto the floor after which she gained her bearings from the fall before replying with "Er hello?" dazed and confused.

The one standing in front of the door was Tsumugu who looked at her in disgusted irritation, "Fuck's sake clone, why haven't you switch to true Nui?"

Clone Nui acknowledged this remark before turning to her side to see true Nui floating there, "what the hell Nui! you're suppose to switch when someone breaks in!"

True Nui looked back at her in return amused, "Like hell I was gonna swap in during that, it was way too funny!" She finished her sentence with a chuckle much to clone Nui's frustration.

Tsumugu responded coldly as ever, "Never mind, Just get dressed, now."

Clone Nui looking at him rather confused as she picked herself up off the floor, "Huh? Where we heading?"

Tsumugu pulled out a cigarette as he answered, "Nudist beach HQ."

Nui checked her pyjama's for orange juice stains, "Please don't smoke in here… Also can I get some privacy?"

Tsumugu tutted as he pulled the cigarette out of his mouth, "Nah you can't."

Nui blushed as she looked at him in surprise, "wait what?!"

Tsumugu checked his watch impatiently, "Can't leave you alone, could try to escape like how you did before, jumping out the window."

Nui nervously twiddled her fingers, "I guess that makes sense, but-"

However she felt Tsumugu's gaze sharpened, "There's no but here Nui 'cept your ass out the door." Tsumugu went to lean up against the nearby wall, "I'm not satisfied with someone not having an eye on you, even if you're on the god damn toilet, not until we got you in a reinforced experimentation chamber, hell, I'm not sure I would even be satisfied then."

Nui had slunk back in fear as she nervously looked back in return, "oh… ok…"

Tsumugu scoffed in reply, "tsh, I wish I still had my finger on the trigger, I should of pulled it back then…"

Nui tentatively spoke up as she changed out of her Pyjamas into a white T shirt and a pair of baggy low hanging trousers, "I-I see… What about Mako?"

Tsumugu quickly responding with, "It's fine, she ain't got school today since y'know, weekend, and her parents probably know she's staying out."

Nui continued nervously getting dressed while Tsumugu looked out the window. "Oh right… Well could I ask what's on the agenda today?"

Tsumugu answered with frustrated sigh, "its… The other Nui's first mission today."

True Nui jumped up in blood form excitably at the mention of this supposed mission by Tsumugu as clone Nui shook uncontrollably.

"Really!?" True Nui appeared joyful to finally get to see some proper action.

Tsumugu sighed once again in his exasperation, "yeah, but if it was up to me you wouldn't be seeing the light of day let alone going on missions…"

True Nui was quick to respond looking at him with a smug look of understanding, "yeah you made that clear already, although I can somewhat understand where you're coming from."

True Nui moved back to place her blood formed elbow on clone Nui's head, casually resting as clone Nui continued to shake from the shock of a lot of her blood suddenly leaving her body.

True Nui then began question again proudly, her satisfaction coming through with every word, "So, shall we skip the rest of the getting ready part and just let me take the Nui spot for a while?"

Tsumugu sharpened his gaze in response, "No, you're the one with the powers supposedly, that makes you more difficult to control, so unless you want your head taken off and made into a trophy, you stay in that room of yours."

True Nui in return grumbled with disappointment, "ugh fine…" She then returned back into clone Nui's body.

Clone Nui recovered from the sensation almost dazed and tired out, "I hate it when she does that… Its like advanced pins and needles all over my body…"

Tsumugu ignored her complaints as he got down to business, "Get your ass ready, we haven't got time to waste."

Nui nodded quietly, her face reflecting the intimidation she felt oozing from Tsumugu. She finished prepping her clothes although all the long she wished she could take a shower, however Tsumugu's impatience prevented her from doing so, as She was forced out to the door, taking one last look at Mako who continued to sleep comfortably in the hotel bed. Tsumugu sat on his motorcycle seat turning the key to the bike, causing the bike to erupt into life as he waited for Nui expectantly. Nui stood there confused at what to do.

Tsumugu turned his head towards Nui glaring at her, "get on."

Nui looked surprised and flustered at the notion, "o-oh… ok…"

Nui sat on the back end of the bike behind Tsumugu, wrapping her arms around his chest fearfully. Tsumugu pushed his foot down on the peddle causing the bike to begin propelling onward as he turned the handle to the bike making them veer out of the parking space and make their way down the road towards the Nudist beach HQ.

They arrived at the base which appeared to take the form of a large skyscraper, however this was only the public area with the actual operations base residing underneath. They reached this by making their way through the large reception, plenty of agents and various other individuals made their ways across the sunlit hall, each agent gesturing a greeting to Tsumugu as he walked past. He made his way into an elevator filled with a few other agents who stood there impatiently, Nui followed along standing among them awkwardly. Tsumugu selected the operations option on the elevator control panel.

After he did this a robotic voice chimed through the elevator "Unauthorised individual detected."

Tsumugu replied to the voice professionally, "Authorisation bypass code one one two five seven."

The robotic voice responded in affirmation, "Bypass code accepted, voice identification complete, welcome Agent Tsumugu."

The elevator started rumbling as they began to descend down into the operations base, the inside of the elevator incredibly awkward as Nui found herself as the odd one out with all eyes on her, with the subtle cough every now and then permeating the awkwardness. The elevator opened up to reveal a large beach like space with an artificial sky, similar in design of their original base although it appears to be a lot larger with next to the beach being a large building made up of many metal panels windows and block shaped out reaches. Many agents made their across the beach and in and out of the building, many of which giving suspecting looks at Nui who nervously glanced back in their directions. On the beach they had testing grounds for DTRs many of which having opened panels being worked on by Nudist beach agent engineers. Tsumugu and Nui made their way inside building, passing through corridors and up stair ways before reaching a large metal double door. Tsumugu placed his hand against a screen on the wall next to the double door, the panel scanning his hand before the same robotic voice chimed from the screen saying, "entry granted." The double doors slid open revealing a dimly lit room. The room was subtly lit up by a a large screen at the back with a dark blue light that left the room in a dark blue-ish hue, In the middle of the room was a long minimalist table held up by a long block pillars stretching from end to end, the table top appeared glassy, reflecting the blue hue. All along the table sat disgruntled Nudist beach agents of both men and women shifting impatiently in their seats.

Mikisugi stood at the end of the table at the other side of the room from the entrance standing in front of the large screen, "Ah nice of you to join us, was wondering when you were gonna show."

Tsumugu was dismissive about the sentiment, "tch, don't blame me, blame the shitty traffic."

Mikisugi turned his head to to Nui, causing her to jump as he acknowledged her, "Hey clone Nui, could you let true Nui take over? Its best she hears this through her own ears."

Clone Nui nodded before being surrounded by red threads, signifying her switch over to true Nui. She was excited to be there much to the displeasure of the agents, "Helloooo everyone! Agent Nui here ready to get down to business!"

Mikisugi followed Nui's notion as he did exactly that and got down to business as Tsumugu and Nui found themselves a seat each, many of the agents keeping a fair distance away from Nui.

Mikisugi announced to the room, "Alright, now that we're all here we can get this meeting started."

The screen changed to reveal a bunch of images on the screen. The images showed things on the line of various gritty looking men, different crime scenes of broken into stores, dead bodies in various positions and scenes of heists where expensive objects were held.

"Our target today is the high Akuma in Kyoto, famed for drug and weapon smuggling, bank heists and assassinations, part of the Yakuza, they used to be a small time gig till the new chairman took over and started supporting them, now they're one of the nastiest organised crime syndicates in Japan."

Nui raised her hand like a student desperate to be heard, "ooo ooo me! me!" Mikisugi gestured in her direction awkwardly for her to speak which she did, "quick question, why are we going after some no name losers?"

Mikisugi looked irritated in her direction, "Did you hear anything I just said?"

However Mikisugi was surprised was to hear Tsumugu interject, "Actually, for once, I agree with Nui." The surprise unveiling itself on everyone's faces including Nui's as Tsumugu continued, "We should be going after those servant ass holes who killed our guys, not these dick heads, leave them for the police."

Mikisugi went on to explain, "We're going after them because we received a tip from the Kyoto police department that they managed to get their hands on DTR and other anti life fiber technology."

Nui appeared amusingly curious about this while the surprise filled the room with one of the agents throwing out a shocked "for real?!" While the other agents worriedly chattered in the background amongst themselves.

Mikisugi attempted to get a hold of the meeting and their attention, "alright settle down, settle down!"

One of the agents spoke up questioning Mikisugi, "Do we know how they got a hold of our tech?"

Mikisugi shook his head in response, "not as of yet, but its under investigation. This group has an informant for the Kyoto police, which is how they found out about the tech currently under control by the group."

Tsumugu nodded contemplatively, "And the police isn't equipped to deal with that kinda tech so they want us to deal with it using the gear as a bargaining chip for us to clean up their rodent issue."

Mikisugi replied with an affirmative tone, "Correctamundo, and so their informant managed to obtain the whereabouts of where they are keeping this tech, so the mission today is a raid to retrieve said tech."

Nui groaned with disappointment, "ugh sounds booooring, why can't we do something more fun?"

Mikisugi complained in return to her disappointed demeanour, "Come on its not boring, we're gonna be taking on highly wanted criminals in another city! And we're gonna be taking a helicopter to get there."

Nui was suddenly interested again, "ooooo a helicopter? Now that is my style!"

Tsumugu calmly asked for more info about the mission trying to get the meeting back on track, "what time will the raid be taking place?"

Mikisugi responded just as calmly with a professional attitude, "According to the intel from the police there's gonna be a group meet up at the 21st district at 4pm, which is where they're apparently stashing the gear."

Tsumugu responded with "so we're going during a group meet up to take down as many of the bastards as possible."

Mikisugi nodded as he began to command the group, "Right, so anyone else got any more questions?" This was met with silence all around the room while Nui casually shook her head, "No? alright time to gear up, we're heading out in thirty minutes."

Mikisugi's final command signified the completion of the meeting as the agents got up from their seats and leave the room with Nui jumping up gracefully, happily skipping out of the room.

The agents acquired their weapons, checking their ammunition, their sights, their safeties and so on with Nui curiously moving about the agents taking quick inquisitive peeps on what they were doing. The agents then made their way towards a large hall. The hall held a Large double rotor black helicopter on a massive "H" surrounded by a white circle. The roof began opening up revealing a long metal elevator shaft the size of the hall. As the back of the helicopter compartment and the agents began to board the helicopter, the floor of the hall started rising up the massive elevator shaft till it reached the outside of the surface building. The rotas began spinning and the

helicopter was cleared for take off as it began to rise off the helipad into the open air. Inside the helicopter sat the agents who fiddled with their gear preparing for the mission ahead, Mikisugi and Tsumugu sat next to one another, Mikisugi seemingly relaxed as usual while Tsumugu had his as usual cold composure.

"You sure this is a good idea?" Tsumugu was the first to speak up voicing his concerns.

"yeah getting this gear back is necessary for establishing balance, you know that." Mikisugi's responded with his chilled swagger.

However this answer seemed to had left Tsumugu dissatisfied, "Not what I'm saying, I mean Nui."

Mikisugi replied with an irritated sigh, "Gotta give her something to do or she might go insane, well at least more insane than she already is."

Tsumugu responded with derision, "I don't see why you're placating this monster in the first place… wait…" he started looking around the helicopter, "Where is Nui?"

Suddenly the helicopter started spinning around at a ridiculously high speed. Back in Nudist beach HQ, the pilot for the helicopter was tied up and shoved in a locker in his underwear before he was found by other nudist beach agents.

Back in the helicopter' cockpit, Nui wearing the pilot's uniform was spinning the control stick around as she laughed playfully, "Hahaha this NEVER gets old!"

In the back the agents including Tsumugu and Mikisugi were struggling to stay on their seats many of them collapsed on the floor while others struggled to put on their buckles. Mikisugi screamed towards the front of the helicopter, "NUI STOOOOP!"

In the cockpit true Nui continued without a care in the world only for clone Nui to appear, "Er Nui we should probably stop…"

True Nui responded obliviously, "why?"

Clone Nui pointed to the back, a worried expression on her face, "It seems like they're gonna puke and if they do, they're probably gonna get you to clear it up…"

True Nui seemed to come to a shocked realisation, "Oh crap you're right!"

She immediately stopped spinning and grabbed the mic to the speakers in the back talking like how a pilot would notify their passengers, "Attention all passengers, please do not puke in the helicopter, I do not want to clear that up."

In the back of the helicopter, Nui had clones Waltzing around in flight attendee uniforms handing out brown paper bags to the many agents who had collapsed all around the helicopter Struggling to recover from her stunt.

Tsumugu struggled to get out the words "too late…" before he grabbed a paper back and vomited into it.

The helicopter landed on a helicopter pad close to the Kyoto police precinct, the back of the helicopter opening up as a ramp for the agents to exit. Each agent that stepped down the ramp were drained of their energy, their faces filled with nausea.

Tsumugu stepped out before collapsing onto the floor, "Thank god… sweet concrete…"

Nui came out not too long after, "Ah what a pleasant ride~"

Tsumugu snapped in her direction, "Pleasant ride?! You're the worst pilot I've ever seen! Fuck I still feel dizzy…"

Nui seemed to be insulted by the remark, "I'll have you know I am an excellent pilot."

Mikisugi then stepped out the helicopter looking strangely refreshed, "You gotta admit Tsumugu, while the spinning was… questionable, the rest of the ride over was pretty damn smooth."

Nui turned to Mikisugi, happily accepting the compliment, "Aw thank you!"

Meanwhile Tsumugu was on his knees gripping his stomach, as he grimaced looking down at the ground, "This has gotta be some kinda nightmare…"

Mikisugi shifted into his professional mode, "Alright I'm gonna greet the police captain, Nui you go with the other agents as they get the vehicles prepped for the raid."

Nui seemed a bit disappointed, however she had abide by the request, "Ugh sounds boring, but fiiiiiine." She waltzed off following the agents.

Tsumugu stood up speaking out angrily to Mikisugi who's back was facing Tsumugu, "the hell are you doing?! She could of killed us all!"

Mikisugi replied casually, "She wasn't trying to, it was just one of her playful antics."

Tsumugu narrowed his gaze, "You call THAT a playful antic?! What is happening to you? Ever since this Nui showed up, you've been getting more and more soft."

Mikisugi uttered in a rather out-of-it reply, "Call it a… change in perspective…"

Tsumugu spoke a bit more softly in reply, "This is about Junichi Isn't it?"

Mikisugi was silent at the mention.

Tsumugu continued, "After all these years and now of all times you are letting this haunt you…"

Mikisugi scoffed angrily, "Hm, you're the last person I want to get a lecture from about the past haunting me…"

Tsumugu Had no reply as there was none as Mikisugi had pointed out his hypocrisy. Mikisugi made his way into the police department. The captain stood close to the entrance to greet Mikisugi, he was in full police uniform had short brown hair, a scruffy moustache and a wrinkled face, "Sir Mikisugi, good to have you."

Mikisugi shook the captains hand maintaining a professional outset, "Police captain Hiroyuki, its good to be here."

The captain gestured towards two plain black vans parked outside the police station, "As requested we've prepared the inconspicuous vehicles for you and your team, if you require anything else, please feel free to let me know."

Mikisugi gave the captain a quick nod with a "Thanks" before turning and moving towards the two large black agent filled vans as Tsumugu entered one of them himself.

"Oh and Sir?" The captain spoke up grabbing Mikisugi's attention causing him to turn his head towards the captain who continued, "good luck."

Mikisugi gave the captain a short salute before turning back and entering one of the vans. Nui was relaxing in said van messing with many of the agents playfully, such as poking them to grab their attention and attempting to sneak peeks underneath their revealing uniforms, especially the female agent that sat next to her. Mikisugi approached the front of the van, Knocking on the wall that separated the front of the car and the back compartment. The van erupted to life as they team of Nudist beach had head out for their mission.

Business as usual

The tires of the two vans rumbled against the rough tarmac. The agents sat quietly cradling their weapons by their side. Nui was doing the best she could to entertain herself, popping about the van she resided within erratically, observing and messing with the agents who sat stalwartly against her annoyance assault.

Mikisugi sat close by, eventually drawn into Nui's attention, "Hey Mikisugi?"

Her sudden acknowledgement of him was met with a "Hm?"

"I've been wondering… you've been real relaxed about having me around despite you were friends with Isshin, the guy I offed, Right?" Nui asked with a curious tone.

Mikisugi appeared to be remarkably inconvenienced by the question, "This isn't really the right time to talk about that Nui…"

However Nui was persistent in her questions, "But I mean every time I met someone who was related to a person I murdered they always seemed to get real pissed at me, even Satsuki was hiding a crap ton of rage underneath that cold exterior of hers, I would normally use that rage to my advantage but when it comes to you, I can't tell if you just buried your anger or are a complete idiot, or both!"

Mikisugi sighed as he crossed his arms, "Look Nui, the world is more complicated than murder and hatred. People are more than the sum of their parts and I think its better to learn from the past than to dwell on it."

Nui appeared rather confused at this answer, "I guess… but I don't get how you can just act like you don't hate me after everything."

Mikisugi began to brood over this remark, "I think… I hate what you are more than what you did Nui…"

Nui appeared to ponder internally about this remark inquisitively, uttering the words inside her own mind, "does he mean the life fibers?"

Suddenly the hatch at the front barrier separating the back of the van and the front swiped open.

An agent in the front passenger seat looked back through the hatch, "Yo we're almost at the target location."

Mikisugi spoke in return to the agents he sat with, "Alright, time to get to work, get ready to move out!"

The agents followed the command with "yes sir!"

Nui replied with her own little "yes sir~" And a playful little salute.

The vans pulled to a halt, the back doors opening and the agents marched out in single file, Nui followed along with her own "march" which was more akin to a playful waltz. The agents formed up, Nui messing around in the background as Mikisugi stepped in front of the group to command them, Tsumugu following close behind with his arms crossed and usual serious look, Nui then joining them standing proudly with her hands on her hips.

"OK boys and girls, this is a simple raid operation, we get in pacify all combatants and we prep all the target gear for extraction, any questions?" Mikisugi's command and question provoked Nui to join the ranks of agents.

she then suddenly bounced up holding up her hand, "Oh I got a question! Do we get to keep any souvenirs? Like guns, drugs or severed body parts?"

Mikisugi appeared to stop for a moment acknowledging the question before continuing like the question never happened, "Alright, lets get this show on the road."

This act provoking a disappointed pout from Nui.

The many agents were in position ready to breach the doors to the inner compound, Nui standing along with them twiddling with her hair impatiently. Mikisugi stood at the front of his group of agents on the right hand side of the double doors.

Tsumugu walked up to him past the other agents provoking a response from Mikisugi, "Well how we looking?"

Tsumugu responded in his gruff tone, "Main entrance is sealed off, and there's no visual into the interior."

Mikisugi nodded comprehensively before asking another question to surmise Tsumugu's reconnaissance, "Any guards patrolling the perimeter?"

Tsumugu shook his head stoically, "Nope, not one."

This response seemed to aggravate Mikisugi, "Shit… Could be a trap set up by this supposed informant…"

Tsumugu leaned against the wall almost casually, "So should we retreat?"

Mikisugi replied with his own question, "And you completed the interior scan right? There's definitely guys in there?"

Tsumugu nodded causing Mikisugi to contemplate, the different possible scenarios. The silence prevailing through the scene as he continued to think.

He then finally spoke up to Tsumugu's expecting gaze, "We can't risk retreating due to our possible lack of information… Looks like we're gonna have to fall into this trap but we go carefully…"

Tsumugu stepped out of his leaning position in affirmation, however the sound of the doors suddenly opening interrupted any further discussion.

"Carefully? Laaaaaame!" Nui's voice rang out as she dashed through the doors before any of the agents could respond.

Mikisugi only being able to throw out a surprised "Nui?!"

Nui dashed through the area, before reaching the main hall of what appeared to be an abandoned car factory. A group of rough yet average looking men appeared to be relaxing on different parts of the old broken down factory equipment. Some of the men were smoking cigarettes, another shuffled through a deck of cards while a few others did various other relaxed activities.

"Time to kill!~" Nui sung happily gathering the attention of the men who made up a group of 12 in total, who were shocked at her sudden arrival.

She unveiled one of her claws, dashing forwards to the closest man. She reached out with her claw getting ready to to strike when…

She suddenly stopped in front of the man the end of her claw less than an inch away from the man's eye.

"HUH?!" Nui reached to the man with disappointed surprise, "Fight back! Come on!"

The man was frozen in place, the only movement from him detectable was subtle fearful shaking and an as terrified gulp. The men surrounding them was as frozen with the combination of fright and surprise.

Mikisugi walked into the room speaking calmly, "come on Nui, you know that's not how we do things."

Nui sighed as she retracted her claw, "Ugh I know… but I do have a point though…"

Mikisugi suddenly realised what she meant, "Wait… no weapons?"

The agents followed suit, beginning to apprehend the group of men.

The man Nui acted like she was about to strike was the first to speak up, "what the hell is going on!?"

Tsumugu arrived immediately expressing his angered iritation "god damn it Nui!"

Mikisugi spoke up to quell his rage, "relax Tsumugu."

However Tsumugu merely diverted the direction of his rage towards Mikisugi, "Relax?!"

The reply from Mikisugi was followed by him looking calmly in Tsumugu's direction, "Yes, relax, it may not have been according to my orders, but Nui going in wasn't a bad move, since if there was a greater trap, she would be the one most likely to come out unscathed. Unless you suddenly grew an aversion to putting her in harms way?"

Tsumugu didn't reply to this, as he merely closed his eyes and crossed his arms.

Mikisugi turned to his right as an agent approached him from that side before saluting, "finished searching the perimeter?"

Mikisugi's acknowledgement immediately provoked the agent into replying, "Yes sir! No signs of the anti life fiber weaponry."

Mikisugi returned to his contemplative state, this time with a hint of frustration, "looks like we were mislead after all…" He suddenly raised his voice, "Alright! Round 'em up, we're taking them to the station!"

Many of the men appeared apprehensive about this with one of them speaking up, "You can't do that! We ain't done anything!"

Mikisugi turned to the man actually responding to his exclamation, "funny you should say that since we haven't accused you of

anything, just want to ask you some questions, so it shouldn't be a problem, if you got nothing to hide that is."

The men's malicious outset began dissipate, as their faces began to point towards the ground and their marched along to the guidance of the agents.

Tsumugu stepped forward joining Mikisugi's side, "what're you thinking?"

Mikisugi took another moment of contemplation. He spoke up calmly and analytically, "Smells like a ruse to me… well we'll find out soon…"

The gruff man that spoke out first was sitting in an interrogation room. He sat on a steel chair in front of a matching steel table. His features were well defined with his scruffy poorly shaven chin and his almost bald head. He bore lines over his face, perhaps made throughout his life through stress or in general difficult experiences. He wore a shirt and sweater vest beneath a light brown open trench coat. One of his legs was crossed over the other as he sat back in his seat twiddling his thumbs as he stared into the large mirror in front of him. On the other side, Nui, Mikisugi and Tsumugu stared back, Nui was reminded of the room she would sew in for Ragyō but thought nothing of it.

"We got anything on him?" Mikisugi questioned seemingly to no one.

The police captain stepped forth into view to answer Mikisugi's question, "A few misdemeanours in the past, mugging, cons and the like, all of which he served punishments for, even jail time, but nothing to tie him to the high Akuma."

Mikisugi continued looking into the interrogation room stoically as he replied in affirmation, "Thank you captain, we'll take the rest from here."

This reply causing the captain to calmly leave the room.

Tsumugu, stood at the back of the room leaning against the wall in his usual arms crossed and cold demeanour, "We're wasting our time, informant gave police the run around, we should get back and continue looking for the servants."

Mikisugi took a moment before he sighed as he replied, "yeah…"

However before the could leave Nui suddenly remarked as She continued looking at the man, sharpening her gaze, "He knows something…"

Tsumugu and Mikisugi turned Nui in surprise with a combined, "Huh?"

Tsumugu continued in surprise, "And how the hell do you know that?"

Nui turned to the two nudists with with a casual smugness, "Lets just say I've done some… premium persuasion in my time…" Nui jumped up happily, "Oh I know! How about I go in and interrogate him?!"

Mikisugi seemed somewhat troubled by the notion, "Nui I'm not sure that's…"

Nui spoke up again persuasively, "I won't hurt him if that's what you're worried about! *at least not physically.* "

Tsumugu was next to object, "you can't be serious."

Nui was persistent however, "Oh come on! if you're worried that I would go against my word or something you can just have the kill switch on hand!"

Tsumugu seemed irritated by even the possibility of this taking place, "How about I pull the trigger right now, rid us of your pain in our asses…"

However, Tsumugu's stoic outset was interrupted, "Alright."

Mikisugi's voice shocked Tsumugu, "W-what?!"

Mikisugi continued to the delighted Nui, "you can ask a few questions, but if you harm him even slightly…"

Nui dismissively made her way out of the room, "yeah yeah, off with my head…"

As Nui left the room and through the corridor she whispered to her side causing clone Nui to appear, "follow my lead…" She said, as both Nui Harimes made their way into the interrogation room.

The man let out an exasperated sigh as True Nui made her way into the room, "Tch its you, the little girl."

Nui acted in pretend surprise, "oh you still think that? Well looks are rather deceiving huh?"

The man seemed rather irritated, "ugh fuck this I'm out of here…"

He stood up out of his seat until suddenly Nui shot a cold malicious look in his direction, "I'm sorry, did I say you could stand up?"

A drip of sweat rolled down the man's forehead as he quietly sat back into his seat.

Nui's face changed back into her usual cheerful self as she replied "Ah there it is!"

The man peeped out a confused "Huh?"

Nui sat on the metal table in front of him casually, "Another peek under the façade, funny thing about looks, they used to be my whole life!" she gestured casual, her onset making the man noticeably uncomfortable as she continued, "well clothing to be precise, they represent how others see us, rather a useful tool since as I said… Dreadfully deceiving." Nui grinned maniacally unveiling her razor sharp teeth as her gaze bared down on on the man who froze with fear. Nui began showing her malevolence… "What you see when

you look at me is a little girl, when others look at you they see a nobody in the wrong place at the wrong time however when I look at you… I see a lying piece of trash!" The man couldn't respond as he continued to be stuck in his paralysed fear which only served to amuse Nui, "Oh my you're doing that thing again aren't you? where you get all petrified with fear! Its so funny when humans do that, but I need answers."

The man uttered out, "I don't know anything…"

Nui began pretending to ponder on the situation, "hm… how do we make you a bit more talkative? Oh! I know! I'll show you a trick!"

The man looked at her with confusion mixing into his fear.

Nui continued as seemingly careless as always, "You ready?" The man didn't respond but Nui took that as a yes nonetheless. "ok… lets go!" Nui unveiled one of her life fiber claws and in one swift motion she… cut off her other arm.

"WHAT THE HELL!?" The man screamed as Nui's stump for an arm spewed out a geyser of blood.

"Tadaaa~" True Nui careless sung as her severed arm dropped onto the table, "but wait! There's more!" She gestured with her eye to clone Nui at her side.

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lone Nui looked worried at true Nui's actions but as requested she played along. She attached red threads to the severed hands before pulling on the strings. The hand moved, much to the man's shock, as clone Nui manipulated the hand's movements like a puppet invisible to the man's eyes.

"Say hello to little miss hand!" True Nui said cheerfully, the hand crawling across the table's towards the edge.

The man inched on the chair away from the table, absolutely terrified, "Keep that away from me!"

Nui merely smiled as she said, "Then tell me what I need to know."

The man whimpered, finally relenting, "Alright! Alright! I'll talk! The factory… Its a decoy…"

Nui appeared to take it in inquisitively, "oh?"

The man continued, "They were moving some kind of gear from it's original storage space… I don't know where! They got me because I got barely any connections to the high Akuma, They got the informant to feed the police misinformation so while they chase red herrings, the real business goes on somewhere else…"

Nui nodded with acknowledgement, "Hm I see… and you don't know at all?"

The severed hand unveiled it's life fiber claw causing the man to shriek, Tsumugu was ready to press the trigger but was stopped by Mikisugi.

"Alright! Alright… I can think of a few places where your shit could be…" the man panicked as he answered.

Nui casually picked up her arm off the table placing it against her stump causing the wounds to reform and reattach, "Okie doki! you boys can take the rest from here!" she yelled out into the mirror.

"Good keep this bitch away from me!" The man blurted out in premature relief causing Nui to glare back at the man with malice, making him shriek once again.

Nui then changed back to her usual joyous self, "be careful with your words mister… And no lying now!" she said as she waltzed out of the room.

The man was quick to draw up the locations of the different hideouts for the gang he knew of. Mikisugi and Tsumugu watching over him stoically as the man was panickly scribbling down on a rough piece of paper.

The man's hand shook as he held out the paper towards Mikisugi who snatched it out of the man's hand before proceeding to leave the room saying smugly, "Thanks for your cooperation."

Tsumugu glared at the man as he followed Mikisugi out of the room. "Alright, so what's the plan?"

Mikisugi read through the the drawn up note. "got it."

Mikisugi pointed to one of the location's names causing Tsumugu to take out of his hands inquisitively as Mikisugi continued. "A restaurant that's a front for the group, has a large underground complex, police lit a fire under their asses so they are gonna want to hide the gear as much as possible."

Tsumugu chuckled slightly, "Looks like they're borrowing our tech and our base building strat's."

Mikisugi proceeded to walk down before turning back to Tsumugu, "You coming?"

Tsumugu replying with "Sure, as long as you keep that dog of yours on a chain."

Mikisugi chuckled a bit in response as the two made their way out of the police station. They entered the black vans joining the waiting agents "Alright! Move out! We haven't got time to waste!"

The vans began to roll along, Nui happily bouncing in her seat budging into the agents who sat by her, "I get dibs on the cocaine~"

Mikisugi sighed in exasperation, "This ain't a drug bust Nui and cocaine is the last thing you need…"

Nui reacted with prideful self assurance, "Aha! that's where you're wrong Mikisugi! plenty of non-related busts can have drugs with them!"

Tsumugu in the other van was listening in to their conversation through Nui's kill switch choker, he decided to put it on speaker as in his brash uncaring ways, "Ugh they're starting to sound like a married couple."

The agent that sat beside him on his right spoke up tentatively, "Er sir? I don't know what couples you're thinking of but that doesn't sound like one at all."

Tsumugu replied in his irritation, "Shut it, its the sentiment, not the fact."

The agent responded worriedly throwing up a salute, "Y-yes sir!"

Tsumugu seemed to dwell as he held the device in front of him. "You see what's happening don't you?"

The agent replied obliviously, "huh?"

Tsumugu continued while he closed his eyes in frustration, "Victory's made Aikurō soft… And now he's starting to forget who the enemy is…" He raised a hand to his face as the agent's look changed from confusion to concern with Tsumugu's voice unveiling a hint of pain, "I won't lose another… never again…"

Victory Ramen

The vans drove smoothly through the roads as they approached the fancier districts of Kyoto. Mikisugi knocked on the front wall causing the passenger sitting by the driver to open the panel, "Yo, park us a few ways off, don't want them getting suspicious."

Mikisugi's command was met by nodding from the two agents in the front as the passenger proceeded to close the panel, with Mikisugi stepped back into his seat.

"Hey why does a restaurant have an underground complex anyway?" Nui asked inquisitively.

A swift nonchalant answer came soon from Mikisugi, "Apparently the restaurant used to be the house of an influential politician who was planning a military coup by raising a private army in his underground base, efforts were squashed and now its a restaurant."

Nui seemed amused by this answer, "Huh what an unconventional history, you think it attracts a lot of customers?"

Before Mikisugi can answer the panel slides open once again, this time the driver yelling to the back, "We found a decent spot, we'll be parking in a moment."

Mikisugi then spoke up commanding the agents he sat with, "Alright boys and gals lets get this show on the road!"

The vans pulled up a block away from the restaurant, parking around the corner.

The doors to the vans swung open, Tsumugu getting out of one with Nui and Mikisugi getting out of the other, Mikisugi hand signalling for the agents to stay with the van causing them to close the doors.

"So…" Nui said expectantly.

Mikisugi quickly broke into a response, "One group will search on the exterior for a possible entrance to the underground base."

Nui immediately threw her hand up, "Dibs not me!"

Tsumugu sighed as he responded, "Fine I'll do it, but what about you?"

Mikisugi spoke proudly, "Me? I'm gonna do some restaurant infiltration."

Nui showed more interest in this part of the plan, "Ooo now that sounds more my style, I bet they have some super fancy food!"

Mikisugi looked awkwardly at Nui, "you know we're not actually gonna be eat anything right? But yes you're coming with, since we're gonna be jumping into the hornet's nest I would prefer to leave my body bullet hole free."

Nui cheered joyously with her usual casual demeanour, "yaaay! However… You can't go in the restaurant dressed like that."

Mikisugi looked down at his "outfit" with irritation, "Hm I guess this would rouse suspicion…"

Nui pepped up like a light bulb turning on in her head, "oh! I have an idea!"

Her sudden proclamation caused Mikisugi to stare at her with an intrigued, "Hm?"

Red threads surrounded true Nui for a moment signifying her quick transformation. Clone Nui appeared where true Nui stood seemingly taken by surprise by the sudden switch, waving awkwardly at Mikisugi and Tsumugu who stared at her in expectant confusion. The crimson threads now surrounded clone Nui showing her switching back into true Nui. She stood there holding what appeared to be a few layers of fabric and two thread spools, the fabric was separated

into two colours being black and white, with the black coloured fabric being rough and lined while the white fabric is silky and thin with the thread spools being coloured matching to the fabric.

"This should just take a moment." True Nui said this before her hands suddenly disappearing into a whirlwind of movement, as she began to furiously sewed through into the layers of fabric. The fabric began shifting and forming shapes, meanwhile two of Nui's clones where standing with Mikisugi, pulling out his arms wrapping tape measures around his chest, waists, arms and legs. Nui continued sewing vigorously, pulling out a pair of scissors every now and then to cut into the pieces of fabric. She snipped off one last thread with her nail before presenting to Mikisugi and Tsumugu.

"Tadaaa~" She held out a pair of black trousers accompanied by a smart white shirt and blazer.

"Woah." Mikisugi was pleasantly surprised as he took the clothing out Nui's hands. "They fit perfectly!" He then put on the trousers and the shirt underneath the blazer.

"Of course they do!" Nui looked in return with smug satisfaction.

"Where did you get the materials from?" Mikisugi asked curiously.

Nui replied in her usual casual outset, "Oh I brought them on a little trip into city center, and kept them in my pocket dimension!"

Mikisugi responded with another question in surprise, "You can keep objects in there?" Nui nodded happily, causing Mikisugi to continue, "Can you take people or animals in there?"

Nui contemplated this for a moment before answering, "Hm I don't think so, since it manifests the objects in that reality using the energy of my life fibers and well living things are simply too complex to do that with, at least when you only got the life fibers I have that is."

Mikisugi nodded satisfied by this answer, "Hm I see." He continued as he took out a weapon. It was a needle gun, however this one took the form of a black pistol shaped sewing machine. He tucked the weapon into the back of his trousers, "Alright lets get going shall we?"

The prepared to move out before Mikisugi turned to Nui, "Oh and Nui?" Mikisugi paused before continuing as Nui turned to face him, "We'll be discussing this little trip of yours later."

True Nui stuck her tongue out in an attempt to look cute in a deceivingly clumsy fashion while Clone Nui floated besides her, looking at her in disdain.

Nui and Mikisugi walked side by side into the entrance of the restaurant, Nui smiling pridefully as they approached the counter to receive their table, Mikisugi throwing nervous glances towards Nui.

"Hello and welcome to heaven's lily how can I help you tonight?" the Maitre' De spoke up in response to their approach.

Mikisugi spoke with a professional kindness, "I would like a table for two please."

The Maitre' De nodded flicking through a booklet situated at the counter, "Hm I see and can I assume you don't have a reservation?"

Mikisugi responded with his own nod causing the Maitre' De to reply once again, "Ah I see, well you're in luck as it is a rather quiet night so we'll have a table ready for you soon."

And it was soon with only a few minutes passing till a waiter arrived leading the two towards one of the tables setting down a menu in front of each of them before walking away. The restaurant was rather barren with only two groups of three sitting at separate ends of the room.

"Hm not a popular place after all huh?" Nui mused as she flicked happily through the menu.

Mikisugi was subtly looking around the room, looking for possible members of the high Akuma and possible armed individuals, The only possible ones visible being a sharp dapper looking woman stood behind a bar drying a glass, a waiter walking by, setting plates holding food down at one of the people filled table and the movement of chefs visible from the counter that lead to the kitchen. "As the man said, quiet night, good for us though, means we can mostly avoid getting civilians involved."

Nui continued to flick through the menu, "Should I have the escargot? or the Ratatouille?"

Mikisugi turned his head to Nui looking at her with the slight essence of frustration, "Nui as I said before, we ain't here to eat, and what part of the menu are you reading? I'm fairly sure they don't sell either of that stuff here."

Nui put down the menu with a sigh, "Yeah I know, I'm just imagining we were at a fancier restaurant than this dump."

This reply provoked a slight chuckle from Mikisugi when he suddenly felt the presence of their waiter approaching their table.

"Hello I'll be your waiter today what can I get you?" The waiter was smartly dressed with a silky crimson waist coat over a embroidered white shirt and a black bow tie. He had smart short combed blond hair and sharp green eyes. A perfectly ordinary waiter at first glance, however he appeared to hold his sleeve tightly against his wrist.

Mikisugi moved his arm as he spoke, "yes well-" his arm subtly shifted a knife in front of him causing it to fall off the table. "Ah my apologies…"

The waiter panicked for a moment dropping to the floor to pick up the knife, "Oh! No worries allow me…"

Mikisugi observed the man as he picked up the knife, the sleeve shifting back revealing a tattoo of a red Oni wielding a large sword, Mikisugi recognised it as the symbol of the High Akuma.

"Oh by the way…" Mikisugi spoke up grabbing the waiter's attention, Mikisugi continued with a sly smile, "What can you tell me… About the High Akuma?"

The waiter tried to hide his shock at the question beneath a façade of confusion, "pardon me?"

Mikisugi continued with his own guise of casual conversation, "Well you see me and my daughter here don't come to this part of Kyoto very often and well we heard quite a bit of rumours about this well renowned crime syndicate who have a fair bit of activity in this area." Mikisugi gestured subtly towards the man's hand, "And well I was hoping you could tell me a bit about them."

The waiter gulped, the slight essence of panic traceable in his expression, "I-I think I'm needed back in the kitchen…" He started to turn away from the table, ready to quickly walk away.

However Nui grabbed his arm on her side before he could leave, "That's rather rude of a waiter

you know…" The man's fear began to surface as he sense the malice in Nui's eye while she smiled as happily as ever while she continued, "… How about you answer papa's questions why don't you?"

Mikisugi waved his hand casually motioning a cease to Nui, "Now now, lets not trouble the poor man." He turned to the waiter, "Please forgive my unruly daughter."

The waiter wordlessly moved away from the table sparking up Nui's curiosity which she directed towards Mikisugi, "Oh you're letting him go just like that? He's gonna tell his buddies you know?"

Mikisugi sat back in his seat, "That's idea, get ready for some… violence."

Nui put her head on her hand propping it up with her elbow, "I do enjoy violence, although that wasn't really on the menu."

Mikisugi gestured with his eyes towards the other tables, "Look."

Nui followed his gaze to see gruff individuals subtly ushering the groups of three sitting at the tables out of the restaurant.

"Our next service should be arriving real soon Huh?" Mikisugi looked back at Nui to see a gun's barrel held up to Nui's head.

"Eh?" Nui uttered as a loud bang rang out through out the room as Nui fell sideways from her seat and the blood flying out from where she was shot.

The man who held the gun sat down in her seat, now pointing the weapon in Mikisugi's direction. The man had one large scar across his face and had wavy red hair, He wore a crimson suit, his eyes were sharp and precise in his malice and he openly showed the Oni tattoo on his wrist for all to see.

Mikisugi sat with slight surprise, as he expected their arrival however he didn't expect the immediate execution of Nui, "Oh already? That was quicker than I expected and already shooting too?"

The man spoke in his response with a gruff accusatory voice, "Waiter said she's the rowdy type, I prefer to get them out of the way while I'm questioning, besides you know more than she did right?"

Mikisugi scratched his chin smugly, "Hm I don't know about that, all I know right now is that I'm rather lucky that you shot her and not me."

The man responded, cold and deliberate, "you'll be joining her soon if you don't speak up." However his threats was met with a confident

smirk on Mikisugi's face, "Actually… Its her that's gonna be joining us."

The man could only throw out a confused "what?" As he began to realise a presence appeared at the side where Nui fell as a fist came rushing from that side connecting with the man's face sending him flying out of the seat.

Nui recoiled from the punch before unveiling a life fiber claw and digging into the part of her head that had received the bullet. She pulled the bullet out and flicked it onto the ground towards the feet of a group of men who stood before the table watching in shock as she had risen from the ground and smacked the scarred man out of the seat.

"Wew its been a while since got shot in the head, that tickled!" Nui began looking at the group of men that stood pointing their pistols at her in silent fear, Nui's mouth widening into a crazed smile, "Can I assume you have that violence I ordered?"

Mikisugi kicked over the table as the men began firing. Nui dashed from side to side unveiling her life fiber claws as she avoided the men's bullets. Mikisugi thinned the herd firing his needle gun over the edge of the table while Nui grabbed one of the men by the head and swinging them into the others, one of the men who remained standing aimed another shot at Nui, however she confused the man with a playful handstand before grabbing the man's head with her legs before flipping him over and slamming him onto the floor. The other men who were collapsed on the ground struggled out of the pile up only to get pulled up by crimson threads used by Nui who committed to a round house kick that sent the group flying across the room. One of the men remained conscious and aimed his gun this time at Mikisugi, however Nui dashed close to him grabbing the gun in his hand before squeezing. The gun crumpled into pieces, but his hand was caught in the crossfire, breaking with a loud crack as the man yelled out in pain.

"Oops! Forgot to hold back there." True Nui acted with a casual clumsiness.

Mikisugi got up from behind the flipped over table brushing himself off, "Oh I wouldn't say that, he still has his hand after all."

Clone Nui appeared floating by True Nui's side, looking worriedly at the unconscious men, "Was this really necessary…?"

True Nui sighed with disappointment, "Jeez you really are naïve… These are criminals, they're treated like scum by even other humans, to them its kill or be killed."

Clone Nui groaned with worry, as Mikisugi made his way across the room, "Lets get to work shall we? The staff members are probably already notifying the other gang members."

Mikisugi grabbed a bottle of gin from behind the bar before making his way back to the scar faced man and pouring the alcohol on the man's face.

The man woke up cough from the alcohol, "ugh… what the…"

Mikisugi was quick to the punch with questions as soon as the man woke up, "Well now its time for you to answer our questions…"

The man paused for a moment with a look of anguish before replying, "Fine…"

Mikisugi mused smugly in response, "Hm that was easier than I expected."

The man uttered with a defeatist tone, "I'm no fool, I know a monster when I see one…"

He gestured towards Nui with his eyes causing Mikisugi to bare another sly smile, "Excellent choice…"

Tsumugu's radio vibrated as he crouched low at the back of the restaurant along side his fellow agents. The stood in front of an opened sliding panel built into the wall that lead to a matching large stair case. The agents crouched along side two well dressed men baring High Akuma tattoos lying knocked out on the ground along side sub machine guns.

Tsumugu answered the radio "Yo Mikisugi?"

Mikisugi answered through the radio's static, "Say over whenever you finished talking, over."

Tsumugu replied with irritation, "If you try to make me do that I'm gonna kick your ass."

Mikisugi replied un-phased, "Duly noted, anyway, we got confirmation, the weapons are here, the raid is a go. I'm assuming you already found a way inside on your end? Over."

Tsumugu responded in his usual cold cynical demeanour, "yeah we got a way in, also we've been hearing a real commotion over their communications about ya."

Mikisugi's voice emanated in his reply, "Excellent, and yeah, we've been making some… noise, we'll continue so you can use that as a distraction to secure the area. I've already sent word to the police to start raiding the other High Akuma bases, over."

Tsumugu threw out an "understood."

Before putting back his radio and hand signalling the agents to follow him into the High Akuma base. The base was made up of sharp turning corridors leading to a series of rooms men rushed through each the rooms baring assault rifles and sub machine guns towards the sign of disturbance. Tsumugu and the agents made their way through the corridors. Whenever they come across a guard in their way, they sneaked up on them shoving a needle into their neck causing them to fall unconscious. They made it to a large double

steel door seemingly locked by an advanced security system via a panel situated on the right side of the door. One of the agents immediately plugged into the panel via a laptop. They tapped a few of the keys before nodding to Tsumugu.

Tsumugu grabbed his radio, pushing the button with his finger, "Hey, we located what we think is their vault for the weapons, how are things looking on your end?"

Mikisugi answered with the sounds of chaos occurring in the background, "Things are… interesting!"

Mikisugi was taking cover as Nui was dashing throughout the corridors hunting down each of the Yakuza members and knocking them out with a punch or a kick, ripping their weapons apart with a single motion of her life fiber claws. Back with Tsumugu the steel doors finally slid open only for them to stare down an active DTR.

Tsumugu growled with frustration, "Get down!"

He chucked a thread spool grenade at the DTR and dodging out of the way as the DTR began firing a chain gun strapped onto the machine as it recoiled from the explosion. The DTR was in a massive hall containing a large multitude of shipping containers.

It was piloted by a crazed man with a green Mohawk, "Come get it shit heads! got this special rebuild ready just for you!"

Tsumugu ran through the room pointing one of his needle sub machine guns firing wildly at the DTR who responded by swinging their armaments through the air knocking the needles out of the air. The Mohawk man laughed manically as he fired back at Tsumugu who was forced to take cover behind one of the shipping container.

The agents formed a line and began firing at the DTR however this only served to grab the Mohawk man's attention "Don't fuck with me!" He pointed the DTR's weapons at the agents and was about to

fire however he was interrupted by the sound of the wall being cut open by Nui's life fiber claws.

The shard of the wall was thrown over knocking into the DTR. Nui dashed over to the DTR picking it up, throwing it into the air and just as it was about to land, Nui in a few quick notions cut the DTR into pieces with a maniacal smile. Nui punched the Mohawk man in the stomach who let out a whining noise as he fell unconscious.

Nui saluted with the same crazed smile before uttering cheerfully while the agents looked on in shock, "Base secured!"

Mikisugi followed behind from the hole made by Nui, "Excellent work everyone, got some transport on the way to take away the contraband, along with police to take away our Yakuza pals. Which means our work here… is done!"

The agents erupted into cheering as Tsumugu looked on stalwartly.

Nui sighed with relief, "Phew I thought we would have to stick around for the boring part."

Mikisugi smiled as he turned to Nui, "There is something else we gotta do however."

Nui's face turned to dissatisfaction at the mention of more possible work, "Ugh… fine what do we have to do?"

Mikisugi shook his head softly, "Don't worry, this ones easy." His reply sparking up Nui's curiosity once again.

The police arrived on the scene, rounding up the criminals and shoving them into police vans in cuffs. Mikisugi and the police captain conversed before shaking hands as several Nudist Beach trucks made their own arrival, receiving the anti life fiber gear and hauling them off the site. Nui followed Mikisugi expectantly as they walked over to the black vans and proceeded to be driven away from the area as the rest of the job was handled by the police and other

Nudist beach agents. Tsumugu travelled in the same van this time as Nui started to become frustrated by Mikisugi's silence.

"You wanna tell me what we are doing yet?" She prodded Mikisugi,

However his lips were sealed till the vans pulled to a halt. "We got a tradition, for our agents after their first missions." The van door slid open to reveal them having pulled up to a Ramen shop. "We find the best Ramen place in town and eat our fill."

Nui looked interested but also partially confused, "what about the other agents?"

Mikisugi shrugged awkwardly, "Said they didn't want to come, I even had to force Tsumugu to come with."

Nui looked at Tsumugu with a smug smile, "Oh did you now…"

Tsumugu merely started walking, "Lets just get this over with." his voice portraying a hint of frustration.

They entered the shop sitting at the counter within the cluttered space.

The chef at the counter greeted them as they sat, "welcome! what can I get you today?"

Mikisugi simply uttering, "your best…"

Not too long later the three was met by three bowls of ramen. They began slurping up the ramen out of the bowls in silence as they gripped the noodles with their chop sticks.

Tsumugu got out of his seat turning towards the door, "I'm going for a smoke." He said walking out of the shop.

Nui continued eating her ramen as Mikisugi began to speak up, "You did well on that mission Nui, surprisingly well."

Nui merely continued eating while she acknowledged his remarks with her words alone, "you weren't too bad yourself, for a human that is… That Tsumugu though… I've been wondering what his problem is…"

Mikisugi swished around his ramen with his chop sticks as he responded, "You mean why he hates life fibers with such a passion right? That's a long story… Hey you mind switching over to clone Nui?" As if summoned by the mere mention, Clone Nui appeared by true Nui inquisitively looking at Mikisugi as he continued, "She's gotta be pretty hungry, having been stuck in that room all day, I figured she would want some as well."

True Nui sighed as she picked up her bowl from the counter, "Tch fine, but I'm taking this bowl with me."

Mikisugi smiled softly, "Sounds good."

Crimson fibers surrounded true Nui as she switched over to clone Nui.

Mikisugi raised a hand signalling to the chef, "Yo boss! Another bowl over here."

Clone Nui split apart a pair of chop sticks as she peered into the ramen, her eyes glowing with anticipation, "thanks for the meal…" She said quietly

Mikisugi watched with a bemused expression on his face, "How are you doing Nui? Things at school OK?"

Clone Nui blushed slightly as she turned her head towards Mikisugi, "Er yeah… its a bit stressful but I did anticipate that…"

Mikisugi slurped some noodles as clone Nui talked before he carried out his own reply, "Its gotta be more stressful right? with Ryūko around I mean, must feel like you're treading on egg shells around her."

Nui swished around her Noodles in worried contemplation, "Its not like I can blame her… given everything that happened."

Mikisugi looked down as he responded, "yeah I understand that… But you know, I don't think its too much to ask for a fresh start."

Clone Nui sighed after eating a piece of meat from the bowl while Mikisugi spoke. Her face lost in turmoil she replied, "I wish I could… But with people like Tsumugu I don't think I can, I wish I could understand their pain and well… make it up to them…"

Mikisugi paused for a moment after Nui said this. He took the weight of this under consideration before he began to explain, "Tsumugu… had a sister…" Clone Nui's attention was now locked on Mikisugi as he continued, "A brilliant woman, she was one of the leading minds in our life fiber research back in the day. She believed that life fibers if worked with could be beneficial to mankind as a whole… However…" Mikisugi paused again as he watched the ripples surround his chop sticks as he held them in the bowl of ramen, "Things went wrong… terribly wrong, in an experiment, she ended up losing her life to life fibers and well… Tsumugu held it against the life fibers ever since…" Mikisugi looked up to see no one else sitting at the counter, "Nui?"

In the cold outside, Clone Nui had ran out to find Tsumugu standing puffing on his cigarette. "Hm?" He uttered in the smallest amount of confusion.

Clone Nui struggled to get out her words as she found herself lost in emotion, "Can… Can I…" Tsumugu looked at her with more confusion as Nui tried to utter through a choked voice, "Can I hug you?!" Nui blurted out raising the awkwardness of the scene.

Tsumugu now having his confusion mix with that awkwardness, before his emotions go to anger, "Why the hell you wanna hug me of all people?"

Clone Nui was stalwart in her approach however, "I… I want to make you happy…"

Tsumugu turned away before flicking his cigarette onto the ground and stamping it out. "I'm the last guy you should want to make happy."

Tsumugu walked away causing true Nui to appear by clone Nui's side shooting her way a demeaning look, "you are such a fool…" And thus concluding their first mission.

Calling in back up

The weekend had passed by, leading to a new fresh school morning. Students made their way from their houses onto trains, buses or into their family member's vehicles to reach school on time. The three girls; Mako, Satsuki and Ryūko were walking as per their usual route. Mako was as talkative as usual discussing the various types of meat you could put in spring rolls. They approached the school, the gate flooded with an influx of students arriving at school, one who stood out however was clone Nui who appeared to be speaking to the empty space to her left. Nui noticed their approach raising her hand to greet them cheerfully. Ryūko sighed with irritation as she reluctantly returned her own wave towards Nui.

"Hello Nui." Satsuki added to their approach.

Nui was quick to bow much to the other's surprise, "Good morning Satsuki, Mako and Ryūko!"

Mako responded happily, "'Morning Nui!"

There was a light pause before Ryūko spoke up continuing, her voice akin to a groan, "So how did the mission go for you and the… *other* one?"

Nui replied awkwardly, not expecting a greeting from Ryūko let alone a question about the mission, "O-oh it… it was alright… we recovered all the stolen equipment with no loss of life and only a few injuries on the enemy side…"

Satsuki was the next to speak up intrigued by the scenario, "Did they ever figure out where the technology came from in the end?"

Nui pondered on whether to talk about this before deciding to confirm, "Er, yeah kinda, they traced the gear back to a Nudist beach

storage house that was raided by an unknown group about a month ago."

Satsuki placed her hand to her chin in contemplation, "An unknown group you say? Do you think it was the Servants of the thread?"

Nui was about to continue explaining before realising Mako was dazzlingly bored and mostly confused from the confusion, "oh… We should probably get to class…"

Ryūko chuckled realising what was happening, "yeah we probably should."

And so they did, stopping at the lockers to change their shoes and grabbing whatever items they needed.

They began walking down the corridor, Ryūko speaking up as they walked, "How the hell can you stand having that chick around twenty four seven…"

As they continued walking down the corridor, they fail to notice Mako stopping mid corridor staring a wall seemingly entranced. She started to write something on the wall before speeding up to join the others.

They made their way into class, stopping to sit in their seats among the chattering of the class room.

Not too long after their home room teacher walked in and faced the class, "hello everyone, I hope you had a nice weekend, me? Well I'm sure you don't really care but I had to take care of my annoying nephew…"

The teacher continued drivelling on as Ryūko turned her head to clone Nui.

Seemingly in response clone Nui began shaking as a blood true Nui appeared to wave smugly at Ryūko, who immediately turned back to

the front in irritation, "Ugh I don't know if I can ever get used to this…"

The teacher ceased drivelling and raised his voice to grab people's attentions, "Oh and that reminds me, you all had homework for yet another weekend, I don't make the rules but can you all have them ready for collection, thank you."

The room was filled with the sound of opening bags and shuffling of papers as the students reached into their bags to retrieve their homework.

However, Ryūko merely looked down at her desk as she panicked fiercely, her mind filled with nothing but "Oh crap oh crap oh crap oh crap!"

Satsuki who sat to her side glared at Ryūko with a heavy intensity as she finished placing her own home work on her desk.

"Ryūko…" Satsuki uttered sternly.

Ryūko turned her head worriedly to meet Satsuki's gaze, "Yes sis…?"

Satsuki sharpened her gaze, "Where is your home work?"

Satsuki's question seemed to provoke even greater panic from Ryūko, "Now I have a good reason this time!"

Ryūko calls back to the previous night where she woke up next to the snoring Mako to the sound of grunts and squealing. Her eyes were met by guts the dog ravaging it's way through her school bag, chewing on her homework sheets.

"You've got to be joking…" Satsuki replied with an exasperated expression.

Ryūko responded with the same level of exasperation, "I wish I was…"

Satsuki in turn sighed with disappointment, "That's so cliché… it seems we will need to form some sort of arrangements for your homework routine…"

At the mention of this Ryūko turned to inner panic as she realised what this meant thinking to herself, "Oh! crap! Does that mean she's gonna do… her supervision again?"

Ryūko remembers a time when Satsuki, Mako and her did a group homework session, Satsuki completing her homework first of course then spending the rest of the time staring expectantly at Ryūko who sweated profusely as she went through each of the questions, "that was way too stressful… I can't go through that again, let alone on a weekly basis!"

Her train of thought however was interrupted by the teacher speaking up to grab the attention of the class.

And so class had began. Mako and Ryūko being almost routinely punished once again for their lack of home work by being forced to stand outside of the class for a period of time. Ryūko looked irritated while Mako appeared unbothered by the punishment, pulling out seemingly from between her breasts her stash of food and chowing down as Ryūko looked at her with a bemused smile. Their last class of the day was lead by a female teacher with an overbearing attitude wearing a tight grey dress bottom, and a smart grey suit jacket paired with a white shirt and red tie. Every part of her expressed her feminine charms including her chin, which was curved and well balanced bearing a black beauty spot on the right side. Her eyes shone behind thin glass wrapped with red frames and showed her ferocity in her strictness with her sharp glare that she would shoot at many of the misbehaving students. She wore her hair in a large dark purple shaded pony tail and held a yellow ruler she would frequently smack the black board with to grab the student's attention with, leading to many of the students to theorise that she's the dominatrix type. She taught maths, and while supposedly she was a rather decent teacher, many of the students ended up rather distracted.

"NUI!" she shouted suddenly however she failed in gaining the attention of clone Nui who stared sleepily out the window to her left.

The teacher suddenly picked up a piece of chalk and chucked it at a high speed. The chalk hit clone Nui on the head, much to the amusement of true Nui who was watching on the side lines. Her face then after the chalk assault was filled with the shock and confusion at the teacher's sudden attack.

Nui then got up out of her chair exclaiming "yes!?" Like a soldier that had just been mentioned by her commanding officer.

The teacher smacked the black board with her ruler, "Solve these quadratic equations! Right now!"

The ruler pointed at what she mentioned, which to Nui looked like a jumbled up mess of shapes and numbers, "Er.. um…"

Nui was lost, and the teacher recognised this immediately, "Its forty eight! Sit down you useless swine!"

Nui looked defeated as she fell back into her seat defeated.

Ryūko thought to herself, "She reminds me of someone…"

Clone Nui's face twisted in anguish as she began lost in thoughts, "She's right! I am a useless swine… At this rate I'm gonna fail everything… Maths, English, science even PE…"

Her train of thoughts was interrupted however by the teacher smacking her black board once again. "Now." All of the class' attention was on the teacher, "I hate to interrupt my own lesson, however we do have the annual sports day coming up in about a week's time."

This failed to spark up any interest from the class. The teacher continued, "I know not many of you are interested but today is the

last day of sign ups for the girls running race and we do actually have two sign ups in this class, for that particular event."

This however did spark up the student's interests out of curiosity.

The teacher once more went on to say as she read off a piece paper she held our in front of her, "And those two are… Mako Mankanshoku, and Nui Harime."

The shock hit clone Nui immediately, who stood up once again letting out an audible "Eh?"

The teacher questioned her in her usual stern voice, "Is there a problem Nui?"

The teacher's gaze frightened Nui who jumped in her skin as soon as she caught the teacher's glare.

"Oh er… nothing…" Clone Nui dropped slowly down into her seat.

True Nui appeared by clone Nui's side, looking at her inquisitively, "Huh I don't remember seeing you sign up for the girl's running race."

Clone Nui's face was filled with panic as she looked nervously towards Satsuki, Mako and Ryūko. Mako looked back happily at Nui quietly waving at her naively.

The teacher continued speaking, "well I expect all of you to be cheering them on during the festival, understood?"

Before any of the students could reply however, the school bell began to ring signifying the end of the school day.

The students immediately began chattering away as they got out of their seats, the teacher attempting to speak up over the noise, "Don't forget you got home work again for this up coming Wednesday!"

Nui approached the group of three girls nervously, "Hey…"

Ryūko looked casually over to her, "Oh hey, didn't know you were signing up for the race."

Nui mumbled worriedly, "Um… Did any of you…"

Satsuki replied curiously to her worry, "Is something wrong Nui?"

Nui desperately tired to eek out her words to sound as non-accusatory as possible, "D-did… one of you… sign me up to the race?"

The scene was still, with an awkward silence, Ryūko and Satsuki stood confused by the very notion of clone Nui accusing someone, let alone them.

"Wha-" Ryūko was about to burst the tension.

However Mako suddenly interrupted, "Oh that? Yeah I did that."

This sudden admittance provoked a collective "HUH?!" From all the group.

Nui worriedly questioned her, "Wait what?! When did you do that?!"

Mako obliviously answering with, "Just today, Saw the post about it on the way to class."

Nui continued questioning, her panic coming through with every word. "B-but why would you do that?!"

Mako innocently answered with a smile, "well… I took a little peak at that note book about the things you wanted to do, and I noticed one of them said you wanted to get into athleticism, and I knew you would be way too nervous to do it on your own so when I saw the poster, I thought, maybe this would be good for you!"

Clone Nui fell speechless at this, while true Nui appeared by her side looking smugly towards clone Nui, "heh, she has a point y'know?" Clone Nui wordless looking towards true Nui with irritation.

Ryūko looked down at her sheets of homework before raising her eyes towards clone Nui and Mako who now conversed, Nui looking just as worried as before while Mako oozed with excitement.

Ryūko then unveiled a suspicious smile as she spoke up casually, "Hey Satsuki looks like Mako's gonna win that race huh?"

Satsuki uttered back just as casually, "I'm not so sure…"

Ryūko's smile widened unveiling teeth as she felt the spark of competition, "Oh really? You think someone else will win? Probably won't be Nui though, unless-"

Satsuki interrupted, "I know you're conniving something Ryūko, get on with it."

In accordance to Satsuki's calling out, Ryūko replied raising her hands to her shoulders, "OK OK, its… a bet."

Satsuki in return began to show interest with a simple, "Hm?"

Ryūko continued, "I bet that Mako will win, and you can prepare Nui, betting that she will win with your guidance."

Mako and Nui cautiously listened in on this bet.

Satsuki responded inquisitively, "And what are the stakes?"

Ryūko gestured towards her sheets of homework, "If I win then… You gotta do all my homework for the rest of the year, and if you win-"

Satsuki suddenly interrupted, "If I win then you will need to complete every one of your homework's under my supervision and keep each of your homework's safe to the day they are due and if you don't then… There will be someone *else* to supervise you."

Ryūko realised what she meant causing a moment of dread to appear on her face before wiping it away to reveal a determined

smile, "Alright sounds good to me. We'll kick your ass, Satsuki kiryuin!"

In turn Satsuki looked back at her sister with her own look of strong determination, "Very well, I accept your challenge… Ryūko Matoi"

Mako commented almost intimidated from the exchange, "Did anyone else just get a strong feeling of nostalgia?"

Suddenly Ryūko turned to Mako, grabbing her hand and pulling her along, "Come on Mako, we need to get prepared!"

Mako uttering back in a vain attempt to calm the determined Ryūko, "Isn't the race in like a week though?"

As Ryūko and Mako left the room Satsuki turned to Nui who stood dumbstruck from the whole exchange, "Come Nui, we need to get you prepared as well."

Nui closed her remaining eye before gathering up her own determination to respond, "R-right!"

Both Satsuki and Nui made their way down the corridor towards the back of the school.

Nui spoke up worriedly, "But Sats- I mean lady Satsuki, I don't have any of the strength or speed of the other me, in fact I'm not really athletic at all…"

Satsuki continued walking stalwartly with Nui following closely behind, as Satsuki replied with confidence, "Yes I took that under consideration." She grabbed Nui's attention as she took her phone out of her pocket and continued to speak, "Have no fear, I'm going to call in… Reinforcements…"

The various clangs and bangs could be heard through out the metal working factory. A few men walked over passed a single large figure who stood working stalwartly.

One of the men spoke over to the figure, "Yo how goes the work Ira?"

The figure turned towards the men to reveal the tanned giant, Honnouji's shield, Ira Gamagōri. He wore a black long sleeved shirt with the sleeves rolled up underneath a heavy dark blue leather apron paired with matching dark blue thick rubber gloves. For trousers her wore a pair of light brown heavy duty khaki trousers.

He placed down welding equipment as he turned and pulled up his goggles from his large imposing eyes looking towards the men, "I'm fine thank you for your concern but I don't require any assistance."

The man looked confused as he replied, "N-no concern, just wondering how things are going, you know like small talk…"

Gamagōri responded with his heavy strict tone as he proceeded to turn back towards his work station, "There's no need for small talk in the work place at this time, since My break was about 3.5 hours ago."

The man sighed and shrugged along with the two other smiling amongst themselves as the man replied seemingly to no one, "Yep that's Ira for ya, Just like his old man…" The man's eyes lit up as he remembered something he needed to say, "Oh that's right, I almost forgot, there's a call in the office for ya, Someone called Satsuki."

Gamagōri almost immediately put down his gear, stepped away and proceeded towards the office, "Thank you for telling me, but please notify me of information like that sooner."

The men looked confused at Gamagōri going immediately from diligently working to going to take the call with the one man uttering a befuddled, "y-yeah sure…"

Gamagōri entered the office and picked up the phone, which sat in front of a tired old man doing crossword puzzles in his newspaper.

He placed the phone against his ear and spoke with a calm and respectful tone, "Lady Satsuki, it is an honour to hear from you again."

In return Satsuki soothing relaxed voice emanated from the phone's speaker, "Like wise Gamagōri, I hope my call isn't too much of an inconvenience."

Gamagōri replied with his usual strong determined professionalism, "nonsense, I am yours to command, nothing at your behest is an inconvenience."

Satsuki spoke back with a calm grateful smile, "I see, you have always been so reliable Ira, You have my gratitude for that, now I have a request for you, that will require you to come to my location-"

Gamagōri suddenly interrupted, "Understood, I'll be there immediately."

Satsuki sounded confused at Gamagōri's sudden declaration, "T-that isn't necessary and besides don't you have to finish work?"

Gamagōri spoke up once again, his voice confident and powerful, "My work is trivial and meaningless compared to any one of your requests Lady Satsuki."

Satsuki replied somewhat troubled by her subordinate's overwhelming loyalty, "I-I see, well then I order you to come here after you have finished work."

Gamagōri responded with closed eyes, retreating within his servitude, "As you wish, I'll see you soon Lady Satsuki and give the others my regards."

Satsuki smiled calmly, "You can do that yourself when you're here, farewell Gamagōri."

Satsuki hung up the phone before dialling another number into her phone. This call was going to make it's way into a large gym hall, several individuals dressed head to toe in kendo gear, each one practising kendo with a fellow partner also dressed in kendo gear, the clashes of their wooden blades rang out through the hall along with several yelps of the individuals conducting their strikes and getting hit with by their opponents. One of the players seemed to attack with exceedingly fast strikes with their opponent struggling to keep up with them.

A voice rings out from the skilful player "MEN" he did a swift strike a towards his opponents head, "DOU" He struck the man's shoulders, "KOTE!" And finally the man's legs.

The battle finishes with the opponent of the skilful player removing their helmet revealing a young man huffing with exhaustion, "damn… again… How the hell did you get so good…"

The skilful individual removed his helmet showing him to be none other than Uzu Sanageyama. His dark green locks of hair slipping out of his helmet shining in the light along with his sapphire eyes, a pang of sweat on his angled jaw, "Well a crap ton of training, then you find the strongest opponent you can find and fight them over and over and over, and try to learn and better yourself from every time you lose."

The young man pondered to himself before he replied, "Strongest huh… Hey Sanageyama wanna go another round?"

Uzu chuckled as he replied, "heh sure-" He interrupted himself as he noticed the ring tone of his phone beginning to echo from across the hall, "actually, I'm gonna take five, sounds like I got a call to take."

The young man seemed impressed as Uzu began walking away, "He heard that from across the hall…?"

Uzu made his way towards his bag situated by the gym door way. he reached inside and picked out his mobile phone. He checked the

number and began bearing a grin as he proceeded to answer the call "Well its been a while lady Satsuki what do I owe the pleasure? You finally getting back to me about that rematch?"

Satsuki replied, her voice matching Uzu's smug satisfaction, "All in due time Sanageyama, remember Impatience is yet another battle that we must undergo. Instead I have a favour to ask of you."

Uzu spoke with the slightest tinge of intrigued surprise, "A favour huh?"

Satsuki returned in affirmation, "Yes, it will require you to come to my school, after which I'll let you know of the specific details, Is this alright for you?"

Uzu took the conditions into consideration for a moment before replying, "yeah sure I got some time to kill this evening, and hell, with this our rematch is practically guaranteed."

Satsuki chuckled slightly before responding, "Heh thank you Uzu…"

Satsuki once again hung up her phone before once more dialling numbers into the screen. A lecture room was empty with all but two individuals. One was a frowning troubled teacher standing next to a young man who sat at the teacher's main desk.

The teacher wiped the sweat off his brow as he spoke up gratefully to the young man "Thank you for all the help, I don't know what this academy would do with out you, Inumuta."

As the teacher said, the one and only Hōka Inumuta was the young man sitting at the teacher's desk, typing away on the teacher's laptop. He wore a dark blue turtle neck accompanied by a lighter blue pair of jeans, both of which matching his shining light blue hair and light blue shaded glasses.

His sharp jaw line and unflinching confident eyes was the same since he went to Honnōji academy. "No worries sir, although you

must take care of your systems, you never know what nasty viruses it can catch."

The teacher grumbled nervously, "I truly don't know how it happened…" The scene was filled with the pressing of keys as Inumuta kept typing away, constantly shifting his index finger to the touch pad.

Suddenly however his confident smirk changes to a slightly surprised frown, "hm sir?…" his mention gained the teachers attention as he continued, "There appears to be some explicit materia-"

The teacher suddenly snatched the laptop off the desk, closing it and hugging the laptop against his chest, interrupting Inumuta.

He quietly mumbled to himself, "damn I thought I deleted everything…" before speaking up to Inumuta, "It must of been because of the hack! You know how it is…"

Upon hearing this Inumuta's subtle surprise changed to a despicable smile just before he responded, "I think we both know that isn't the case sir." The teachers terror in his face deepened as Inumuta prepared to continue, "You know I'm gonna have to report this."

The teacher turned to Inumuta, His terror mixing with shock, "Wh-what?!"

Inumuta stared right through the teacher, "That is… unless you were to give me some system time on the academy's central mainframe…"

The teacher's face now turned to hot anger, "Are you blackmailing me Inumuta?"

However Inumuta was as cold as ice, "what if I was?"

The teacher's anger then began to explode, "I could have you expelled for this!"

But his anger was refuted through Inumuta's calm response, "Now now lets be honest sir, with my academic record and reputation among the faculty if anyone is gonna be punished for talking about this, its you."

The teacher grumbled in his frustrated rage, "damn you… Fine! I'll get you that system time…"

Inumuta failed to hide his smug superiority behind his pleasant façade, "Excellent, pleasure doing business with you."

The teacher trying to suppress his anger made his way out of the room, "I won't forget this Inumuta…"

However Hōka simply replied, "I'm counting on it sir, I'm counting on it."

Inumuta stood up from the desk as the teacher exited the room. He was picking up his bag off the desk before he noticed the muffled sounds of his phone beginning to emanate from within his bag. he Zipped open the bag and pulled out his phone, his smile widened as he saw the number calling him.

Leaning comfortably against the desk he tapped the answer call icon on his phone's screen. "Lady Satsuki, its been a while since you've called, usually we talk online."

Satsuki spoke back, her voice once again calm and soothing, "well there are some things I prefer to talk about over a call rather than in the form of text. At any rate how are your studies going?"

Inumuta close his eyes as he replied with a relaxed demeanour "Ah they're going swimmingly, although this place is a little bellow my level, the tech they got is decent, but the courses aren't teaching me much I don't already know, I was thinking of dropping out and taking up a full position on Nudist beach, god knows they need it with the whole servants of the thread fiasco."

He changed his position to be more upright as he continued, "Speaking of, is that what this call is about?"

Satsuki responded casually, "Oh no nothing that urgent, I do have a request for you though, something that requires you in person, as in return-"

Inumuta spoke up interrupting Satsuki, "Don't worry about anything in return lady Satsuki, I may not be your direct subordinate anymore but you have done for me so much that I couldn't pay back for a life time."

Inumuta pushed up his glasses mischievously, "And besides, the should-be-dead Nui Harime is there… A paradoxical existence like hers should have all the data I could ever want and then some."

Satsuki soon returned with a calm content reply, "Well then it works out, as this request is regarding Nui."

Inumuta stood up from his leaning position with a little jump, "Perfect, I'll finish up here then make my way over to you."

Satsuki closed her eyes with a warm smile, "Thank you, Inumuta." Satsuki had hung up the phone before she turned around to Clone Nui, "Alright, we should be set, although we will be waiting a little while…"

Nui nodded nervously before speaking up, "Erm… Satsuki? was those people who I think they were?"

Satsuki replied strongly, "Indeed it was, you are about to meet the other three of the four strongest, bravest and smartest people I have ever met. Now… Nui?"

Nui almost jumped from the sudden change of the tension carried within Satsuki's statement, "Y-yes!?"

However Satsuki simply replied, "Remind me… Where's the nearest vending machine?"

Operation dash to the finish

The sky was a vivid red, mixing with the clouds fluttering about the forming shapes more alive than people's wildest dreams. A beautiful backdrop that befell upon the track just outside the school. The three of the elite four stood in a uniform line, they all wore casual wear with Uzu wearing a light green T shirt beneath a much darker green zipped down hoodie paired with matching shorts. Gamagōri wore the same black shirt from work underneath a light brown coat. While Inumuta was wearing the same clothes from his academy. The three stood facing Satsuki and clone Nui, Satsuki smiling welcomingly while Nui sweated slightly wondering what exactly was going on. There was an awkward silence as the three men stared down Nui, measuring her up as both a threat and a person.

"Erm…" Nui spoke up quietly grabbing everyone's attention, "hello you know who I am but I think its only right we are well… Introduced."

Gamagōri stepped forward, "Nui."

His sudden mention almost caused Nui to jump in her skin, "Y-yes!"

Gamagōri bared down on the in-comparison tiny Nui, his voice strong and commanding, "If you ever hurt lady Satsuki in ANY way-"

Nui raised her hand slightly, speaking up to interrupt Gamagōri, "uh Mr Gamagōri? Not to interrupt your speech but Miss Jakuzure already gave a me a similar warning…"

Gamagōri seemed somewhat befuddled by this reaction, "O-oh I see…"

However the awkwardness within the moment was offset by Uzu's sudden burst of laughter, "Ha! As expected of little miss loud mouth!"

Inumuta had a smug smirk as he responded to Uzu's exclamation, "you're in luck that she's not here or that loud mouth of hers would be giving you an earful."

Uzu loud joy simmered down to casual satisfaction, "Heh ain't that the truth…"

Uzu had another quieter chuckle as clone Nui's eye shone with intrigue.

True Nui sighed watched in her ghostly form invisible to all but clone Nui, "ugh…"

Clone Nui spoke from her heart for but a moment, not thinking of the consequences, "Wow you guys aren't at all like how I expected you to be…"

The three boy's eyes shifted to Nui in calm curiosity with Gamagōri uttering "Hm?"

Nui panicked as she realised what she said, shuddering as she attempted to get out her words for a reason for her strange remark, "W-well I only k-know about you g-guys from the original Nui's memories… and you didn't seem to be like this…"

Gamagōri took a moment to think about how to respond, "Well you're no longer our enemy as far as we're are concerned, perhaps you will be able to partake in this aspect of our companionship, that is if we don't end up skewering you like last night's takoyaki."

Uzu walked up before switching to Nui's side to throw his arm casually over Nui's shoulder, "Yeah! yesterday's enemy is today's ally after all, unless today starts looking like yesterday."

Nui seemed somewhat troubled by the talk of possible hostility but ultimately was grateful for their accommodation, "T-thank you for having me…"

Gamagōri seemed blush a little in response to Nui's remark, her cute fragile expression slightly piercing his cold exterior.

Inumuta pushed up his glasses with an ominous smirk as he thought to himself, "So those kinds of things are still your weakness, Gamagōri."

Satsuki raised her voice, immediately capturing the attention from all in attendance, "Alright, that Should do it for the introduction."

She paused for a moment as the others settled down, Uzu pulling away from clone Nui's shoulder, Gamagōri taking an almost military-like stance as he regained his composure, Inumuta pulled his eyes up from his phone's screen and Nui moved her gaze to Satsuki with a noticeable gulp.

Satsuki continued as soon as she was under the everyone's observation, "so, you must be wondering what you are here for."

Nui raised her hand cautiously, her action quickly provoking a response from Satsuki, "Not you Nui" Nui slowly lowered her hand before Satsuki continued, "To put it bluntly I have made a bet for my sister's future. As she desires to escape from her responsibilities when it comes to homework. This bet is regarding the sports day occurring at our school in a week's time, specifically a running race that both Mako and Nui are entered into. Ryūko has bet that Mako will come out victorious in this race while I have bet that Nui will win."

Uzu spoke up, his smirk audible in his voice, "And let me guess, you want us to whip her into shape?"

Satsuki nodded with calm amusement, "Indeed, as this Nui isn't very… athletically inclined."

Suddenly Inumuta spoke up, he appeared to now be sitting in a foldable lawn chair as he peered into a laptop resting on his lap, "That's quite the understatement Lady Satsuki, truly a shame with such a remarkable biological make up as this…"

Nui threw out a confused and worried "eh?!"

However Satsuki ignored this to stand by Inumuta and gaze into his laptop's screen, "So is it not possible then?"

Inumuta tapped the keys on his laptop at a furious speed as he replied, "Well it is physically possible, but to be honest I've never seen anything like it, life fibers are replicating the behaviour of normal human genetics! truly remarkable, and if my calculations are correct the life fibers should also be able to replicate muscle growth and increase in lung capacity as well as the other human bodily improvements."

Satsuki nodded contemplatively, "Hm I see, and our time frame?"

Inumuta pushed up his glasses as he replied, "I would need a bit more data before I can make a proper estimate, but… its not looking promising."

"I understand." Satsuki spoke calmly before turning to the other three.

Gamagōri stood waiting patiently for Satsuki to finish convening with Inumuta, while Uzu was patting Nui's head with a causal close eyed grin on his face.

"Nui" Satsuki spoke after she turned to face them. Nui gently pushed Uzu's hand away from her head as she perked up in response to Satsuki who continued to command her as soon as she had Nui's attention, "Can you go get changed into your gym uniform then run a lap around the track?"

The command was phrased as a question but to clone Nui there was no choice in the matter, "R-right!"

She rushed off into the school to put on her gym clothes, true Nui close behind, her spectral form lying on the ground spectating with a bemused grin before disappearing.

Satsuki turned to Gamagōri as Nui made her into the school, "Can you run with her Gamagōri? try to motivate her to keep going whenever she begins to slow down."

Gamagōri nodded respectfully as he replied, "As you wish lady Satsuki."

Nui returned wearing a white t-shirt fearing thin black letters making up the kanji for "Gym uniform." and a pair of long red shorts accompanied with white running trainers. She also tied up her hair into a singular large pony tail that flowed out behind her.

Clone Nui spoke as she did a couple of casual stretches, crossing her arms over each other while stretching them out and stretching out her legs in a crouching-like position "Jeez I'm glad they don't use bloomers like some of the other old-school well… schools."

True Nui looked at her with smug amusement as she retorted mockingly, "I think its a shame would of made for quite the pretty sight…"

Clone Nui responded by staring with irritation at true Nui before noticing the shade of Gamagōri's figure enveloping her as he loomed over her.

"Nui" He said, his voice deep and commanding.

"Y-yes?!" Nui's figure shot up as she nervously looked up to Gamagōri with a sweat on her forehead.

"Why are you still standing here?" Gamagōri questioned but sounded more like a demand.

Nui threw out a confused "Huh?"

Gamagōri raised his voice suddenly, "Start running! Now!"

Nui jumped at Gamagōri's sudden command, "R-right!"

Nui began running down the track as per Gamagōri's instruction, Gamagōri following close behind.

"Pick up the pace Harime!" he shouted once again causing Nui's speed to heighten as she breathed heavily struggling to maintain her stamina.

Uzu, Inumuta and Satsuki spectated as Nui tried her best to run quickly around the large track. Gamagōri ran close behind consistently shouting, "One two! One two!" to set up a pace for their running steps.

Nui gasped for air attempting to throw out her own "One two…" In sync with Gamagōri through huffing breaths.

Inumuta was spectating through his laptop as he run his complex systems to measure all of Nui's physiological data.

Satsuki spoke to Uzu as she watched, "What's your take on Nui's proficiency?"

Uzu sighed with irritation in his reply, "Honestly… Not good. Her form sucks and her breathing is all over the place."

Nui arrived at the end of her lap, leaving the track to join Satsuki, Inumuta and Uzu, Gamagōri following close behind. Nui immediately threw her hands on her knees, desperately huffing to regain her breath after the run.

Satsuki turned to Inumuta, "well?" Inumuta looked up from his laptop and pushed up his glasses, "I'm basing this estimation on my previous readings on Mako's data in comparison to clone Nui's data. So this won't be entirely accurate as there is some unknown factors such as the other students participating in the race. However, based on Nui's current lung capacity and muscle mass I estimate the time we shall require to be… three weeks."

Inumuta's announcement provoked a miniature mix of shock and disappointment from the group.

"Three weeks?" Satsuki uttered

Inumuta calmly nodded, "Yes although this is predicated on a best case scenario, with a strict regimen."

Satsuki placed her hand to her chin as she considered the situation, "I see… And we only have a week…"

Inumuta replied in affirmation, "Indeed, it could be possible to condense this into a week however for miss Harime this could be considered a… living hell, less sleep, more training, combined with lessons to assist in her athletic knowledge as well as several different exercise routines that would need to be played into each other and a strict diet."

Satsuki's look of consideration began to mix with concern, "So to achieve this would be to force this strenuous training onto Nui…" Satsuki closed her eyes as she sighed with disappointment, "I can't force that on her, not for my selfish desire to win a bet against my sister, to make her go through that for such a reason would start reminding me of the days back in Honnōji academy…" Inumuta silently watched on stalwartly as Satsuki turned to Nui, "Tell me Nui…" Satsuki's mention brought Nui's attention to her as she continued, "you didn't choose to join this race, and so it would be wrong for me to force you to under go it given how difficult the preparation will be, and so… do you wish to drop out?"

"drop out?" Nui questioned, she didn't even realise that she hadn't considered the possibility of dropping out ever since the two sisters made their bets, "But what's gonna happen to your bet with Ryūko?"

Satsuki sighed once again, this time with a disappointed shrug, "I suppose I'll have to forfeit, its a shame but… I can't make you suffer for my own personal reasons, I stopped being that kind of person a long time ago."

Inumuta, Uzu and Gamagōri held their heads low with subtle frowns in acknowledgment of Satsuki's sentiment. Nui's mind rushed back as she thought about the situation. She thought back to the moment when she was surrounded by Nudist beach agents and declared her desire to live only to think that she was going to die, when beyond her expectations, Satsuki and Ryūko stood by her side and accepted her hope.

She grit her teeth for a moment before speaking up, "No."

Her sudden statement surprising the others, with Satsuki throwing out a "Huh?"

Nui continued, her eye now filled with conviction, "No I won't give up, I may not have started this, but I'm gonna finish it! But not just for you, if I'm gonna do this… I'm gonna do this for myself as well, I'm gonna do this to improve myself!"

Satsuki surprise climbed higher only being able to say, "Nui?"

Nui began to continue once again, "I mean if I'm gonna be able to do this, I gotta put my all into it right? so I'm not just gonna do this to win but to improve myself! But you can be sure that I am gonna try to win!"

Satsuki was speechless from Nui's sudden declaration when Gamagōri raised his own voice, "Now that's the spirit Harime! I can work with that!"

Uzu joined him, just as enthusiastic, "Hell yeah! I thought you were a bit of a wimp but damn you actually got some guts!"

In turn Inumuta added on with a calm yet somewhat supportive tone, "Indeed, the conducting of the training should be much easier on the basis of you having a personal stake within the conflict."

Satsuki remained in her bewilderment as Nui went against her expectations, "Are you sure about this Nui? You may come to regret

this decision."

Nui pondered on her response for a moment before replying, "You might be right… But if I second guess all my decisions… Then I don't think I would be here today." The group felt an unexpected nuance from Nui's response as Nui continued, "Its why I gotta follow what I believe in, even if the path is rough… Its the journey I've chosen to walk, right?"

Satsuki closed her eyes and smiled with satisfaction, "Yes, you're exactly right Nui. Very well!" Satsuki raised her voice commanding the entirety of the group, "Gamagōri, I want you as Nui's continued coach, whenever she trains and exercises I want you there pushing her onward."

Gamagōri responded with a subtle nod "Yes lady Satsuki."

Satsuki then continued in her declaration, "Uzu, I want you to be her athletics trainer, in-between training sessions with Gamagōri, you'll be teaching her proper athletic information."

Uzu in turn replied with a miniature playful salute, "yes ma'am~"

Satsuki then turned to Houka, "Inumuta, you probably have already guessed that I want. You will be running data analysis on Nui's athletic capabilities."

Inumuta nodded with a confident smirk, "Of course ma'am, I could run analysis on the other students as well if you wish."

Satsuki considered this for a moment before responding, provoking a look of awkward concern from Nui, "Eh… A bit too stalkery."

Inumuta nodded once again, "As you wish."

Satsuki then spoke to the whole group, "Alright! Tomorrow we begin; Operation dash to the finish!"

(This next paragraph goes well with the song; "Hidden potential" by TWRP, listen to that song while reading for the full experience.)

It was an early morning for Clone Nui. She was tired and envious of true Nui who continued to sleep, however she splashed cold water in her face and got going. She wore a red track suit and was accompanied by Gamagōri who wore his own yellow track suit. They ran through the cold morning air, every time she lost breath and slowed down Gamagōri called to her to keep her going. After the running, she was within Satsuki's house studying under Uzu's tutorage meanwhile Satsuki was standing staring into a monitor as Inumuta sat in front of the monitor advising her. Nui was then at school doing her best to stay awake and reviewing what she was told by Uzu during breaks. After school was more exercise, push ups, running on the spot and stretches. Mako and Ryūko did their own training, Ryūko appeared to chuck Mako into the air like pancake dough and bending Mako over her shoulder as Mako hummed in enjoyment this being a sort of stretching. While Nui and Gamagōri ran on the spot, Ryūko put a croquette on a fishing pole and attaching that to Mako's back, causing her to run on a running machine. Days passed by as the training for both teams continued, Nui and Gamagōri doing all sorts of exercises, pull ups, push ups, more running, Ballae for some… reason and athletics studying. As the week continued, clone Nui became more and more tired barely being able to stand up at points, true Nui watched in amusing at her struggles whilst also also relishing the time she could spend close to Satsuki. Clone Nui shot her doubleganger looks but pressed onwards with her exercise. Inumuta would smile into his screen as he saw Nui's athletic capabilities rising, apparantly even on schedule, taking time to provide Nui with a breathing tube to do a more accurate measurement of her breath intake and outtake and placing pads on muscle specific parts of her body to measure their growth, something Nui felt somewhat uncomfortable about. The week was reaching towards the end point, Nui managing to run more and more less tired by the time she reached the finish line provoking a surprising thumbs up from Gamagōri. Nui was giving a momentary time of rest that night, feeling somewhat confident for the first time.

Run like the wind

Clone Nui sat under her kokatsu table with a comfy sigh, sipping a brand of green tea suggested to her by Inumuta out of her favourite handless cup as she held it with both hands and her elbows resting on the table. She smiled with satisfaction as she thought about her last running session with Gamagōri, she got her best time yet.

True Nui popped up by her side floating in the air as always in this spectral form, "Well you seem in a good mood."

Clone Nui responded joyfully, "Of course I am, I feel like I actually have a chance now."

True Nui circled around to clone Nui's other side, lounging casually in the air, "Hmm you sure? the race is only two days away and that bobble head isn't any joke when it comes to speed."

Clone Nui responded with slightly less confidence in her voice, "well I know it isn't guaranteed but I think I can do pretty alright…"

True Nui replied looking at her doppelganger with a smug smile, "alright miiiiiight not cut it for Satsuki."

Clone Nui looked down at her tea contemplating this with a worried expression.

True Nui suddenly spoke up with a seeming epiphany, "Oh! I know! How about you let me run for you?"

Clone Nui looked surprised as she replied with "Huh?"

True Nui continued, her hand movements expressing her pride in her own ideas, "I could dress up like you, then run juuuuuust slow enough to make it look human, I win the race, and you take the credit!"

Clone Nui replied almost taking offence to the notion, "I can't do that! And besides wouldn't Inumuta be able to sniff you out?"

True Nui's response held an air of smug satisfaction, "I've been able to fool snooping computers before, and why exactly can't you do it?"

Clone Nui frowned as she stared down into her teacup, building herself up for an answer, "well… I told them I was doing this for my own self-improvement, if I did this then I would be lying about that."

True Nui pointed in clone Nui's direction as she replied with a sharpened gaze, "but you're already lying about that aren't you?" Clone Nui looked back at true Nui with silent shock, this look being enough of a response to make true Nui continue, "Oh come on, you may be more "human" but you're still me, I can see right through you, you're doing this because you don't want to disappoint Satsuki." Clone Nui remained silent, staring back at her teacup as true Nui floated in close to be the devil on clone Nui's shoulder as she continued, "You're doing this because you see yourself as a weight on their lives, you want to validate your own existence… don't you?" Clone Nui's grip on her cup tightened as true Nui continued "If you disappoint them, if you can't prove you have worth then what reason should they have to let you live after the pain you caused them?"

The tension held in the air for a moment before clone Nui's gaze softened as she turned to True Nui, "Yes you're right Nui… I'm just like you, desperate for a reason to exist."

True Nui's face changed to cold rage for a moment before she simmered down, "Ugh… fine suit yourself."

True Nui disappeared leaving Clone Nui to sit on her own staring down quietly into rippling surface of her green tea.

The last day before the race had arrived and clone Nui was up early running laps around the park with Gamagōri waiting close to the finishing line with a digital stopwatch. She stopped running just as she reached Gamagōri who pressed a button on the stopwatch with

his thumb, stopping the count with a beep. Nui clasped her knees her back bent over as she tried to regain her breath.

Gamagōri frowned as he looked at the watch before speaking up to Nui, "What's wrong Nui? you're slower than you was in the last session."

Nui huffed as she tried to gather herself for a reply, "I'm sorry mister Gamagōri… It's just… a lot been on my mind…"

Gamagōri threw out an interested "hm?"

Nui stood upright before continuing, "well I…" Nui blushed for a moment looking down at the ground unveiling her embarrassment, Gamagōri blushing as well at the cuteness of Nui's expression. Nui continued shifting aside her emotions, "I'm scared of losing, of… disappointing everyone, disappointing Satsuki… I guess it's kinda taking a toll on me."

Gamagōri took a moment to consider his answer before kneeling placing one of his gigantic hands-on Nui's tiny shoulder, Nui buckling under the weight before Gamagōri realised she was struggling to withstand it before loosening his grip. Gamagōri spoke calmly, each of his words oozed with sentimentality, "When I was back as the head of disciplinary committee, I would see a lot of kids that would feel that way, each one worried about their future and not being good enough for the academy. And well looking back on those days, I should of helped those kids, but the ideology of the academy was that we had to push these students to be the best, to be good enough to meet our expectations." Nui stared deeply at him as Gamagōri looked down at the ground in melancholic nostalgia, "I wish I could go back and helped those kids, told them what they needed to hear, that they can be good enough that other's expectations doesn't matter and what truly matters, is that you can prove to yourself that you are enough, I never even considered that those kids were doubting themselves, I just saw them as weak and moved on…" Gamagōri looked back up at Nui with a sombre smile, "That's why I'm here now to tell you that you don't have to prove

anything to anyone, you said it yourself, you're doing this to improve your athletic skills right? well then that's all you need to focus on, and winning is just a part of that, and well even if you don't win, you can still be confident that you gave it your all." Nui's eye glowed as she looked at Gamagōri in surprise before he stood up and brushed down his knee, "now… you up for another lap!?" Gamagōri's sudden question sparked Nui into doing a playful salute before running off through the park, her face holding a smile as she ran with renewed determination.

True Nui had watched the exchange between clone Nui and Gamagōri. Now she lied back in the bed of her pocket reality, her arm on her forehead as she stared up at the ceiling in cold melancholy. She thought back to a time in her childhood. It was a session where she spent sewing within a cold steel room, Ragyō, sat across a matching table, watching the little Nui impatiently.

"Maman?" Nui looked up at Ragyō only to be met with Ragyō's cold stare.

"Don't stop sewing." Ragyō said sending Nui into a hurried frenzy looking back down at her textiles continuing to sew. Silenced prevailed for a moment before Ragyō spoke up, "What is it Nui?"

Nui answered cautiously as she continued to sew, the anxiety filling her face, "Well… I… I'm kinda scared…"

Ragyō responded with slight confusion, "Scared? what could you possibly be afraid of?"

The little Nui struggled to eke out her response, her sewing having slowed to a standstill before she looked up, her eyes met with the glare of Ragyō before she once again hurriedly continued to sew, "It's just… well I worry about… not being good enough…"

Ragyō replied with a disappointed sigh, Worrying the young Nui, "Nui, you should know this, such conduct is unbecoming of the grand couturier." Ragyō stood up from her steel seat before sitting on the

table, her side to Nui. She looked down at the little girl and held a finger beneath her chin forcing Nui to look up at her, "doubts? insecurities? Such things are irrelevant to ones such as us, as these are the signs of wilting flowers, and what do we do with those?"

Nui spoke hesitantly once more as she stared into Ragyō's eyes, "We root them out…"

Ragyō smiled as her hand moved to stroke Nui's cheek, "Exactly, so there is no such thing as 'good enough' and 'not good enough', only the weak and the strong, and through that we know who deserves to live, and those that are vermin beneath our feet." Nui nodded as she stared up at Ragyō who then got off the table, speaking up to the little girl with irritation, "good, now finish up quickly dear, Maman has another meeting scheduled with the board members."

The memory ended leaving the present True Nui back staring aimlessly at the ceiling. She clenched her fist hard enough to leave marks in her hand with her nails as her lip quivered as her mind was filled with nothing but self-deprecation. "It seems I was a wilting flower after all Maman…"

The day arrives, students and parents flood the streets alike making their way to school for the annual sports day. Of course the usual three, Satsuki, Mako and Ryūko was strolling among the other students.

Ryūko looked around at the crowds of people all walking down the street with slight impressed surprise, "Damn, I knew sports day was popular, but not this popular…"

Satsuki replied with a bemused smirk, "Indeed, I think it's safe to assume from our own class' enthusiasm to contend that most of these people will be playing spectators to the sports."

Mako followed along blissfully enjoying the atmosphere of the scene. Suddenly however their walk was interrupted by the sight of Nui and Gamagōri jogging down the side of the street in track suits, shouting

"One! Two!" over and over in unison with each other and their steps, Nui baring a strong look of determination on her face as she ran.

Ryūko looked even more surprise at this sight watching along with Mako as Nui and Gamagōri sped off up the street, "damn Nui really is taking this seriously huh…"

This comment of Ryūko's provoking a look of smug satisfaction from Satsuki, "yes she has."

This look causing Ryūko to show obvious irritation as she seemed to spin around to present Mako as her prized fighter, "Well Mako has been taking this super seriously as well! right Mako?!"

Mako looked confused for a moment throwing out a befuddled "huh?" before realising what she should say, "Oh yeah! I'm taking it suuuuuper seriously, just let me at em just leeet me at em!"

Ryūko kept looking at Satsuki with determination as she calmly notified Mako, "Mako this is a race not a fight."

Mako seemed to undergo another realisation as she replied, "Oh right… Yeah I'm gonna beat the heck out of them! In a race that is…"

Ryūko sighed "Never mind, lets walk ahead Mako, we need to talk strategy."

She began to push Mako along who was still rather confused but went along with it with an "Ok Ryūko!" the two made their way along the street, excusing their way past all the other passers-by's as Satsuki watched in calm bemusement.

Suddenly Satsuki's phone began to ring, causing her to quickly answer it with her usual eloquence.

"I see your intimidation tactic is working out well." It was Inumuta.

"Houka?" Satsuki answered back with slight surprise, "Where are you?"

Inumuta replied with a simple, "Look up." Satsuki did so with intrigue to see a white drone floating in the air, the buzzing of its rotary blades not quite audible to Satsuki from the distance. Inumuta spoke up as she looked at the drone, "As you know I have a preference to avoiding crowds."

Satsuki felt awkward about the situation but did her best to remain understanding, "I… I see…"

Inumuta responded again this time sounding more serious, "Everything is going along schedule, Nui is now at the school with Sanageyama completing her last athletic session."

Satsuki responded with the same professionality, "Excellent, after that the rest shall be up to Nui."

Inumuta replied with an air of scepticism, "Are you sure she will be able to do it Lady Satsuki? my data states she's only now reaching a level that contend with Mankanshoku, not to mention the large number of unknown variables such as the other students."

Satsuki replied with calm confidence, "Have faith Hōka, have faith…" Satsuki started walking once again moving her way towards the school, a slight smile unveiling the essence of joy on her face as the sports day was about to begin.

Satsuki re-joined Ryūko and Mako at the school entrance as a cacophony of noise rained out from the school grounds, the sounds being made up of people shouting and cheering amongst the crowd over presumably various sporting activities. Mako gave Satsuki a playful little wave as Ryūko stood looking at Satsuki with a confident smirk.

"Hey Satsuki! Can hear all that noise!? it's amazing!" Mako called out happily above the various sounds.

"Yeah, it seems like this year's sports day must be quite the spectacle indeed." Satsuki replied with her own brand of level-

headed enthusiasm.

Ryūko cheerfully enjoyed the company as she listened along, suddenly however she heard a buzzing sound before being startled by the drone now hovering to her right, "What the hell?!" her surprise was interrupted by her phone going off as the drone continued to hover by her side.

She cautiously answered her phone to Houka's sly voice "Perhaps I could fit a speaker onto it…"

Ryūko responded with irritated familiarity, "oh it's you Inumuta."

Houka replied with calm bemusement, "Yes, hello Matoi, I trust you've remained a good sister to lady Satsuki, because if you haven't, I would know."

Ryūko seemed to take this with a level of awkward intimidation, "E-er right…"

Inumuta chimed in as if he remembered the reason why he called, the drone appearing to wobble in tandem with him speaking, "Oh also, the race is due to begin in about two and a half hours, I suggest you get Mako prepared within that time, oh and you're likely gonna be scolded since you are supposed to be taking part in the sports day activities "

Ryūko continued looking awkwardly at the drone as she groaned with annoyance, "tch… don't remind me, wish they wouldn't make that crap obligatory."

Inumuta finished off with "well take care now, I'm going to join Gamagōri and Sanageyama, well my drone is…" He phone had hung up after saying this with the drone proceeding to float upwards as Ryūko continued to look at it with the same mildly exasperated expression.

Satsuki approached Ryūko a loving expression on her face as she said softly, "Shall we go?"

Ryūko matched her expression with her own form of loving enthusiasm, "yeah! Don't wanna be late after all."

After Ryūko said this Mako suddenly jumped in-between the two girls, hooking her arms around their shoulders, "WOO HOO this is gonna be so fun! I bet they're gonna sell candy floss, Okonomiyaki, yakisoba noodles-"

Ryūko replied with a bemused expression as Mako continued to ramble about various foods "you realise this is a sports festival, right?" As the three girls made their way into the high school.

They passed through into the changing rooms instructed by their teacher to put on their uniforms after being reprimanded for being late. Soon they were out on the field which appeared flooded by people, the students in their athletics uniforms, the boys wearing blue track shorts accompanied by white T shirts, the girls of course being a mirror image of this except with their uniforms being red themed instead of blue. most of crowd were at the outer rim where the civilians watched the events taking place in their normal casual wear and cheering at the top of their lungs. The events shifted from tug o' war to long jump to football, Satsuki and Ryūko participating in these many activities, Ryūko almost taking off the enemy's goalie with a shot that tore the net off their goal, only to cause irritation from Satsuki who gave her a dressing down about forgetting to hold back Ryūko's life fiber induced strength. The two girls got increasingly competitive when they ended up on opposite teams of a volleyball match, Ryūko delving back into her classic demeanour from the Honnōji days while Satsuki played with calm intimidating precision.

While Ryūko and Satsuki played with impressive levels of competitive spirit whenever they played against one another, clone Nui was able to sit aside spectating the events while she reviewed the information from her last lesson with Uzu, she was allowed to do this since according to the teachers the 800m track race is the

supposed highlight of the school's sports day and so all competitors are given the time to prepare for the race. She watched in awe as Ryūko and Satsuki played with fiery spirits but still smiled together no matter who claimed victory, her eye glimmering with a familiar sense of longing.

True Nui appeared by clone Nui's side watch as well in smug bemusement, "well they must be having a lot of fun huh…" Clone Nui didn't answer causing True Nui to float close to her ear and whisper suggestively, "you know… you're cute when you're jealous."

Clone Nui immediately jumped in her skin before turning to true Nui with a shocked expression, "W-WHAT?!"

True Nui busted into smug laughter, clone Nui now looking at her with irritation. True Nui attempted to contain her laughter to eke out a reply, "Oh relax Nui I'm just messing with you, and besides I'm not exactly wrong now am I?"

Before clone Nui could carry out a defence, Uzu suddenly sat down next to her exuding casual confidence, he was wearing a dark green T-shirt paired with light forest green shorts, he appeared to be holding a bottle of water half empty, "Yo you talking to yourself again?"

Nui jumped in her skin in surprise once again, it having become a habit she's been trying to get a handle of, "Mr Sanageyama!"

Uzu appeared slightly irritated, taking a swig of his water bottle before replying to Nui, "What's with the formalities? Just call me Uzu, by the way where's Mako?"

Nui tried to hide her embarrassment by hiding half her face in her notes, "Her family arrived with some lunch for her."

Uzu's mouth curved into a relaxed smile, "Oh so she's chowing down, is she? Don't expect that to give ya any edge, I don't know what's in those croquettes but damn they just give ya a boost." Nui

didn't respond as she began reading through her notes provoking an interested stare from Uzu, "Heard Gamagōri gave ya some advice, honestly didn't expect that, he's changed a lot since the student disciplinary committee chair days, can't blame the guy for that though, the things we did back then were real fucked up even if they were to save humanity."

Nui then looked at Uzu empathetically, "well looking back at those times I'm sure anyone would try to change…" After saying this clone Nui looked to her left over her shoulder to see true Nui floating there who looked back before pouting and turning away, her see-through image fading away as she did.

Clone Nui then looked back at Uzu with a more relaxed expression, "well do you have any advice with your newfound wisdom?"

Uzu appeared to contemplate as he looked out at the students playing in the various sports games before answering tentatively, "Don't… lose?"

Nui raised her voice in surprised irritation, "Huh?! What kind of advice is that?!"

Uzu tapped Nui's forehead with his index finger, "Well you're doubting yourself right? That means you're losing in your head, you gotta win there first before you win in real life."

Nui's look was now rather bemused, "that's… decent if not as eloquent or heartfelt as Gamagōri's"

Uzu stood up stretching his arms out with a casual sigh, "well the more things change, the more they stay the same." He began walking away, giving a back turned wave to Nui, "Well the race is due to start soon, I look forward to seeing your competitive spirit, now I'm gonna go find Gamagōri wherever he is, probably furiously cheering on lady Satsuki…"

Nui watched Uzu walk away with a hopeful smile before standing up and looking at the ongoing sports activities readying herself for the challenge to come, "Time to run."

The announcement rang out. A monotone voice came blaring from several speakers positioned around the school areas, "Attention all spectators and students, the 800m races are about to begin, starting with the girl's race."

In sequence the many visitors and students littered around the field began to gather around the track area. Of course Ryūko and Satsuki stood close by the finish line where Nui, Mako and four other female students stood carrying out stretches preparing themselves for the race to come. The atmosphere around Ryūko and Satsuki held the heat of their rivalry, something that was clear to Nui and Mako, Nui turning to Mako who gave a wry smile and shrugged. Nui then looked at the other students competing in the race, one of the students was tanned with a slim physique and short brown hair. This girl drew Nui's attention the most due to the heavy amount of adoration the surrounding crowd seem to have for her as she simply waved back with an appreciative expression, she also appeared to have obtained the ire of the other girls competing. Nui wondered why this was the case but decided not to think about it and took her focus back onto the race. A teacher approached by the side of the finish line holding a starting gun. The students competing then lined up on the track in their own individual lanes attracting the attention of the surrounding spectators, including Ryūko and Satsuki who's gaze's were heavy with the weight of their expectations.

"Ready…" The teacher spoke, raising the tension within the scene.

"get set…" the teacher's next words caused the students to assume their readying positions, one leg behind the other ready to push themselves forward, their backs hunched over with their hands holding themselves up from the ground, Mako only doing this after realising the other students had already assumed their positions.

A moment of silenced arrived, even the spectators caught in the moment's intensity, watching eagerly within the mere seconds the race was due to begin.

A gun shot pierces the silence, and as soon as it did, the race began, the six girls was running at a medium speed. The spectators started roaring with cheer as the students sped their way around the track. Nui was in forth place to start off with, Mako was two places ahead of her, Nui's face was filled with determination, her mind suppressing the worry by telling herself that it was only the first out of two laps. Mako ran with an over-the-top fervour, while it wasn't pretty, it was effective as she not only kept pace with the student in-front of her, but was even gaining ground. Nui kept her pace at a minimalist rate with steady breathing, the instructions from Uzu constantly flooding her mind.

The first lap ended, causing the girls to start picking up the pace, and in a moment that filled Nui's heart with dread, the girl that was placed behind her, suddenly passed her. Nui's mind turned to panic as they began to approach the quarter way point. Nui wanted to look back at Satsuki but forced herself not to, her mind distraught at what she believed to be imminent failure. However Her mind thought back and words started to replace her panic;

"That's why I'm here now to tell you that you don't have to prove anything to anyone."

"you're losing in your head, you gotta win there first before you win in real life."

Nui's teeth clenched as she began to pick up the pace, her legs pumping with a high speed. She passed one student, then another… and then she even managed to catch up with Mako. As soon as she did, Mako noticed her increase in speed then began speeding up herself and soon they overtook the last student and was neck and neck as they passed the halfway point. The world disappeared from the minds of Nui and Mako as they furiously sprinted towards the finish line. They turned the corner and the ribbon representing the

goal came into their sight line, their speed increasing as they went all out, Satsuki and Ryūko were astonished, going silent for a moment before becoming the loudest of the crowd cheering on their respective champions with a renewed vigour. Nui and Mako were now coming extremely close to the finish line, the cheers around them becoming the wind at their backs. They got closer and closer… the ribbon captivating their view, closer… the pounding of their feet filling their bodies with reverberations that carried them forward in the adrenaline, closer and closer and closer… they were inches away from the finish line, however… just before they hit the finish line both of them were passed by the tanned girl Nui had noticed from the start of the race. This student winning the race. The crowd erupted into even louder cheering along with furious applause, while Satsuki and Ryūko remained in stunned silence, the surprise revealing itself on their faces.

Ryūko was the first to speak up as she continued to stare with shock, "Who the hell is that?!"

Suddenly on Ryūko's left there was the buzzing of Inumuta's drone along with his voice emanating from a speaker now attached to the drone, "Her name is Aiko Nami, she's the schools rising star on the track, having won local competitions and is on the road towards entering the Olympics, her presence being in races having been enough to dissuade many students for signing up for said events."

Satsuki responded with irritation to this explanation, "This would have been information I would had liked to know before this."

Inumuta replied with level-headed confusion, "But lady Satsuki, you were the one to tell me to not delve into the information behind the other competing students, the information here was merely relayed to me by Uzu who gained it from just by talking to various spectators."

Satsuki merely responded with a melancholic, "I see…"

Ryūko spoke with a matching level of melancholy, turning back to the track, "So wait did we both lose?"

"perhaps, but I would say they both won." Gamagōri spoke as he seemingly appeared at Satsuki's right.

Ryūko and Satsuki now looked at Gamagōri, with Ryūko speaking up in her curiosity, "Oh yeah? how'd you figure that one out?"

Gamagōri replied with strong self assurance, "They achieved in sparking the flame of their competitive spirit." He then smiled as he gestured towards the track, "Look."

Nui was standing on the track, huffing heavily to catch her breath with her back bent over and her hands on her knees. She stood upright looking about struggling to hide her disappointment before uttering, "So I lost huh…"

Suddenly Mako in her boundless energy ran up giving Nui a hug while yelling "NUUUUUUUIIIII" She then held Nui's shoulders and looking to her eyes with her usual bright smile, "That was amazing!"

Nui's solemn shell was beginning to be broken by the warmth of Mako's kindness as she hesitantly replied, "R-really?"

Mako nodded cheerfully continuing to ooze her bright positivity, "Yeah! You were so fast! It was incredible!"

Nui's face changed to a smile as she tried to return Mako's kindness, "you were incredible too Mako." This response causing Mako to hug her once again.

Gamagōri, spoke with expressing his warm appreciation for Nui's and Mako's actions, "You see? victory of claiming first place on the finish line isn't nearly as valuable as the strength of those spirits that can burn bright enough to outshine their failings, they are truly champions."

Ryūko and Satsuki now smiled, Ryūko looking to the side trying to hide her blushes while Satsuki smiled with closed eyes in understanding, merely saying, "well said Gamagōri… well said…"

A few more sporting events took place, Uzu somehow managing to disguise as one of the competing students in the boy's race although he was quickly stopped when found out. And after a few more games, the tired students were relieved as the sports festival concluded.

Within a dark room, a man's voice rang out, the same voice that spoke to the operator after the first appearance of the servants of the thread, "I think we've waited long enough, it's time to get started with our next moves… Executioner."

A red spotlight illuminated a figure within the room, many of the features of this figure obscured by their shadow, "Yes sir?"

The voice spoke again, his tone was strong and authoritative, "You will be conducting the extraction mission, while the next hit operation will be undertaken by the reaper and the operator."

The executioner replied with a hint of annoyance, "Hmph you sure we should be giving that mission to the operator after his last failure?"

A smug smile could be heard in the man's voice, "Its fine, even if we fail… We have nothing to lose…"

Cut paste and execute

A nudist beach agent stood in front of a helicopter pad. He was a grizzled old timer, an obvious veteran agent wearing a nudist beach uniform although it seemed to bear a large medal on the right strap, his uniform also included a pair of sunglasses, his head was slathered with slick black hair and above his lip sat a cheesy but decently groomed thick grey moustache. The agent watched expectantly as the air was filled with with the sounds of whirring as a helicopter lowered onto the pad.

The agent placed his finger against his ear piece and tried to raise his voice above the sound of the helicopter, "Yeah he's arriving right now."

As the helicopter landed the side door slid open and who stepped out was professor Xavier Natrium. The professor quickly walked forward to shake the hand of the Nudist beach agent.

"Ah director Goda, seems the place turned out quite nice."

The agent replied with an amused smile, "Heh yeah, although there's still some kinks we need to work out, so to speak."

The two started walking away from the helicopter pad, the professor looking about curiously, "I was wondering, why did you decided to build this place in the desert? I would of thought you were tired of getting sand in your underwear, although I'm starting to doubt you wear any…"

The two men then began walking through a large complex filled with nudist beach agents completing various activities, many of which were moving about from place to place, some standing guard while others moved large industrial crates via forklifts. Surrounding the complex was a large wall where agents patrolled on, armed with

needle rifles. The complex was connected to a road via a large gate at the front of the complex.

Goda answered the question as he placed his hand against a panel next to a large steel sliding door, the panel scanning his hand before the two sides of the door slides open, "Yeah well after observation, we learned that the specimen has adapted itself for the desert environment, that and it makes for a convenient isolated location away from the public, also yes we don't wear any underwear."

They began walking through steel corridors, past other agents who appeared to be conducting construction work on various parts of the halls while others made their way into various rooms via similar doors to before. The agent passed the professor a lanyard, with a laminated card reading "VISITOR" the professor giving it a quick look over before putting it on.

The agent spoke up as he led the professor to an elevator, the doors sliding open within a moment after Goda pressed the button to head down, "Things have been on edge ever since that attack in Japan happened."

The two stepped inside the elevator, the agent standing on the side of the control panel pressing the button labelled "B1" as the professor replied, his voice showing sympathy, "Yeah I heard about that, I'm sorry, it must of been hard to lose so many of your fellow agents like that…"

Goda simply grumbled solemnly, "Part of the job."

The elevator dinged just as the doors slid open revealing another corridor. There were several doors along this corridor but straight ahead was a much larger door with two nudist beach agents wielding needle rifles. As Goda and Xavier approached one of the armed agents gave a thumbs up to a security camera situated in the middle of the corridor. Another agent in the facility's main control room witnessed this through the camera feed before tapping some keys on a keyboard allowing access to the large door. As the large door

opened the two armed agents gave salutes to Goda who saluted back before leading Xavier through the door. Beyond the large steel door lied a darkened room.

The professor looked about in confusion, "Do we need night vision goggles or something?"

Goda merely stood with his arms crossed as he shouted, "Lights!"

All of a sudden large spotlights illuminated the room. The room was a large hall-like room with the wall at the back being made of a thick glass, behind the glass was an area simulating an open cavern environment with the life fiber creature sitting still on the cave floor.

The professor perked up observing the creature enthusiastically as Goda began narrating over the display, "Its been becoming more and more inert ever since we captured it, possibly entering some sort of hibernation state."

Xavier approached the glass looking closely at the entity as he answered knowledgeably, "Of course, she's low on food…"

As the professor attempted to get close to the glass for a close up observation, suddenly several tendrils sprouting from the creature sprang to life and immediately flew at the glass. The sudden movement of the creature startled Xavier causing him to stumble backwards in surprise. Xavier looked back at Goda for a moment, Goda watching still with his arms cross and the same expression as before, however Xavier seemed to feel he was being judged by the veteran agent.

The professor cleared his throat awkwardly as he straightened his tie attempting to salvage some of his perceived lost image, "E-er well as I was saying…"

"Hm what is it? I'm with a VIP right now." Suddenly agent Goda interrupts holding his finger against his ear piece, "What?!" He raised his voice, capturing the curiosity and concern of the professor as he

paused for a moment to receive a reply, "Alright, I'm on my way." Goda then turned towards Xavier, his tone more cool and professional than before, "I'm afraid a situation has occurred that could compromise the security of this facility. I'd hate to interrupt your observation of the specimen but its best for your safety that you accompany me to the main control room."

The doctor started walking towards the door as he responded with exasperated understanding, "Yes yes, I understand there's a procedure to this kind of thing, however I expect to have an exorbitant amount of time with the specimen after."

The large steel door opened with the professor stepping through, agent Goda taking one last look at the life fiber creature before the lights shut off causing Goda to follow Xavier out of the room.

The two quickly made their way through the facility, making it to a black version of the usual steel doors with the nudist beach insignia inscribed onto it. The doors slid open to reveal a large room with many rows of desks with a large gap down the middle leading from the door. In front of each other each one holding monitors displaying various information with agents sitting in front of each of the monitors causing the room to be filled with various chatter. At the back of the room was a large screen displaying the open air above the desert, specifically a helicopter approaching from the distance towards the direction of the camera.

"What the hell…" Goda uttered beneath his breath before making his way down the central aisle while Xavier scratched his chin with intrigue as he continued to observe the display. As Goda reached the centre of the room he turned his head to one of the agents sitting in front of a monitor, "What's their ETA?"

The agent sitting at the desk who appeared to be a man wearing a standard nudist beach uniform replied to Goda as he continued to hurriedly inputting into his keyboard, "About a minute sir, we still ain't sure where they came from exactly since even in this desert plain the vehicle wasn't visible till about 5 minutes ago."

Goda held his hand on his chin as he squinted from behind his sunglasses, "Hm I don't like this at all… Have you tried hailing them?"

The agent looked back up at Goda, "yes sir, no reply."

Goda nodded understandingly, "Alright, let me try."

The agent then handed a mic connected to a small stand to Goda. A few seconds passing before the agent giving Goda a thumbs up to inform him that he was ready to talk, "Attention unidentified air craft, This is the head of this facility. You are entering restricted air space, I suggest you turn away or we shall be forced to take abrasive actions.

Goda pulled the mic away from his mouth and waited for a reply from the other end of the call while he watched the feed on the main screen. However no reply came and the helicopter continued approaching from the distance.

Goda turned back to the agent, handing off an order with a firm and professional voice, "Ready the anti air and send out an announcement to all the agents present in the facility to be ready in their battle stations."

The agent threw out a concerned "Sir?"

Goda looked out strongly back at the feed from the main display, "I refuse to let us get caught out on our asses again when we have the capability to save lives."

"Yes sir!" the agent's voice more firm as he accepted this duty.

However before the agent could complete the order, suddenly three strange objects began to appear around in the air around the approaching helicopter. The shape of the objects was obscured from the facility's view due to the angle of the camera, however the way they moved was unlike any missile or other possible objects they

could be. This sight caught the attention of Goda, Xavier and every agent in the control room who stared with worried curiosity, but before they could make any rational response, the objects suddenly flew from the air around the helicopter and crashed into different parts of the facility causing shaking through out and massive damage to the areas they hit.

The impact of the attack hit the control room almost immediately sending shockwaves throughout the area causing desks to shake, monitors to flicker and glitch including the main feed at the back, some monitors falling and breaking. The agents were on immediate damage control.

Goda immediately sending urgent orders to the agent next to him, "Fire the Anti air missiles!"

The agent quickly started activating the anti air missile launchers, three of them to be exact dotted around the roofs of the facility. The agent using his still functioning computer activated the targeting function for the weapon's systems, placing an aiming reticule over the image of the approaching helicopter.

"Firing!" the agent shouted as he pressed a key.

As soon as the agent did this the missile launchers fired several missiles at the helicopter. Everyone in the room watched with the tension climbing higher for every second the missiles approached. Suddenly three more objects started appearing around the helicopter.

With the distance now having closed quite a bit the shape of the objects were far more visible, causing Goda to utter in his shock, "Are those… scissors?"

It wasn't even half a second after he said this when the objects appearing to be large pairs of scissors began flying about with a frenzied pace, intercepting with every missile causing them to explode before reaching the helicopter. The scissors then flew

throughout the facility, targeting the missile launchers and destroying them.

Goda threw out a frustrated "Shit!" He then went to give his next order, "fire the anti air heavy machinegu-"

"Sir…" The agent at the desk interrupted Goda and the fear could be heard in the agent's voice.

Goda went from looking at the agent to looking back at the main display feed to see the helicopter hovering right above the facility, a large figure appeared at the door of the helicopter before jumping out. When they hit the ground they caused the largest impact to the facility yet, sending up an explosion-like cloud of dust and debris. This impact hitting the control room would be the one to finally shut down the main display.

Goda's expression went to calm focus as he began to address the whole room, "Alright everyone! I want a squad here with me protecting the control room and I want another squad protecting the holding cell for the specimen since that's most likely what these bastards are after, and lastly I want DTRs on the move with every available agent moving to intercept the intruders understood?"

All the agents in the room shouted a collective "Yes sir!"

Goda then responded imbuing his words with strong leadership, "We ain't gonna let these assholes get the best of us! We are the sentinels of humanity! We are…"

Goda let his sentence trail off so the agents in the room could collectively shout to finish it, "NUDISTS. ON. THE. BEACH!" Goda nodded approvingly, "That's right! Now lets get to work!"

The rest of the agents then began to mobilise, grabbing their needle rifles and setting up the security within this room, while other agents communicated with the other personnel within the facility.

Goda turned towards Xavier, "I apologise about the trouble professor."

Xavier replied understandingly removing any tension between them, "No need to apologise, these things happen, well… sometimes."

Goda smiled with appreciation before gesturing towards the agent he was next to earlier, "This agent will guide you to our safe room, you won't need to worry about anything there; its at the lowest point in the facility, lined with impact resistant steel and it will lock automatically with that visitor tag you got."

Xavier nodded professionally, "Thank you director Goda and… good luck."

Goda nodded back before Xavier and the guiding agent made their way outside the room.

On the outside of the building within the perimeter of the facility, nudist beach agents began forming a barrier between the crater and the centre of the facility. DTRs rumbled their way pointing needle machine gun attachments towards the centre of the crater, and along side them were Nudist beach agents crouching as they aimed their needle rifles in the same direction. The cloud of dust emanating from the crater obscured much of the centre however the agents started to see a figure at the centre. The cloud began to dissipate as the helicopter above started to lower, allowing the agent to see the figure standing at the centre. The figure was a tremendously large man wearing a black suite jacket with crimson lines running down vertically throughout, the jacket was accompanied by matching trousers and a black shirt with a red tie. What caught the attention of the agents though was The red gladiator-like helmet followed by matching crimson gauntlets and plate boots. The man appeared to look at the agents, moving his head from side to side slowly.

As he looked he seemed to be counting under his breath, his voice deep, gravelly and oozing with malice, "One… two… three… four…"

The man continued to count provoking confusion from the agents, however one of the agents decided to take a shot at him. The needle bounced off his helmet and interrupted his counting.

He then uttered a simple "Alright, I've wasted enough time." And began marching towards the agents.

One of the agents was spooked by him suddenly approaching and shouted "Fire!" to the rest.

With this the agents began firing together at the man, however just before the needles hit him, his gauntlets began to sparkle with the energy of life fibers forming red stars. Crimson threads seemed to fly off from his suit, these threads forming two large pairs of scissors reaching just above the man's towering height floating in the air just in front of him. These scissors started to spin at incredible speeds acting as a shield to the barrage of needles flying at him, every needle seemingly bouncing off from the scissors as they were knocked out of the air. The firing began to cease, either from the agents running low on ammo or from their worried confusion at what's going on. As soon as the firing stopped the scissors ceased spinning.

The man then uttered beneath his breath, "My turn."

Suddenly a great many crimson threads flew off from the man's suit, these threads forming a dozen large red pairs of scissors which hanged in the air around the man, pointing towards the agents. The agents started to run from their position, however they realised too late as the man raised a fist in front of him before releasing his fist into an open hand, this seemingly causing the many scissors to fly at the group of agents. The impact of the scissors hitting the group of agents sent many of said agents flying, while others of the agents were cut to pieces and the DTRs were obliterated with their parts also scattering about, followed by the debris from the ground. The dozens of scissors returned to being crimson threads before flying back to the man's suit. Behind the man five servants of the thread, wearing their black suits beneath combat jackets and gas masks,

zipped lined down from the hovering helicopter before forming a stationary squad formation, aiming assault rifles in all directions. The man gave a short motion to advance and the servants did as such, cautiously inching their way forward as they aimed at any possible point where an enemy could be while the man lead them, confidently strutting towards the centre of the facility.

The corridors were filled with chaos as the invaders barged their way through, any agent they came across were gunned down by the standard servant members or cut to pieces by the armour bearing man's floating crimson scissors. While this was happening Xavier and the agent reached the safe room, Xavier swiping his visitor card over the control panel next to the entrance causing the large thick vault-like steel door to open. A mild level of rumbling reached the corridor the two men were standing, given they were two levels beneath the ground this was presumably caused by a rather devastating attack.

Xavier was turning to head inside the safe room however he looked to see the agent cocking his rifle as he prepared to join the fight, "Wait! Those guys seem incredibly strong, if you head back there I can't imagine your survival rates being promising…"

The agent looked at the professor with a sombre smile, "Thank you for your concern sir, but I cannot abandon my fellow agents whether I die or not, its part of the job."

Xavier continued looking at the agent for a moment before closing his eyes resigning himself to the man's fate, "I understand… Good luck."

The agent broke into a run as he proceeded back down the corridor as Xavier turned away walking into the safe room with the door shutting behind him. The agent went up to the holding cell for the life fiber entity, joining the squad of agents protecting the room.

One of the agents within the squad throwing out an almost light hearted "Nice of you to join us."

The newly joining agent in turn threw out a simple serious, "Lets do this."

A sudden bang rang out sent the squad of agents into formation, aiming their rifles with razor sharp gazes at the elevator door down the corridor. The elevator was now rumbling with movement signifying it's approach sending the tension higher. More seconds passed but to the agents each one felt like an hour, the elevator continued to rumble longer and longer till suddenly. A ding. It pierced the quiet like knife through hot butter. The agents placed their fingers on their triggers as the doors slid open. However within the elevator appeared to be nothing sending the squad into confusion before suddenly, a dozen large crimson scissors about the size of half a person flew out from the sides of the elevator. They span wildly in the air heading straight towards the agents. The squad panicked opening fire at the dozen of scissors however each of the needles the agents fired out bounced off the incoming scissors. The scissors pierced the agents many hitting them in the chests sending blood flying onto the steel walls of the corridor, one of the agents were picked up within the guillotine of a scissor before the scissor snipped, cutting the agent in half. The elevator rumbled once again before another ding, the doors now opening revealing the large man who lowered his head beneath the top of the elevator door, stepping through with the servants of the thread soldiers following close behind.

The large man approached the door to the specimen's chamber, placing a hand on the door, "you sure this is the one?"

One of the servants replied "Should be according to the buildings schematics, are you going to cut this one down like the others sir?"

The large man took a moment of contemplation before replying, "… Nah, best not to disturb the entity and besides, we need to head to the control room anyway." The man turned around and gestured to three of the servants, "You three, stay here and secure the area." he then pointed the other two servants, "you two, you're with me."

All five of the servants saluted as they threw out "Yes sir!" With two following the Large man as he proceeded back towards the elevator.

Back in the safe room, Xavier appeared to be messing with his phone, repeatably tapping the screen as he mumbled to himself in his frustration, "come on work…"

Eventually he was met with a notification of success as the screen began to display what seemed to be a camera feed of the facility's control room, the camera appearing to be angled from the right side of the door towards the back of the room.

The professor threw out a relieved "Ah good…" Before he began to converse with himself in his thoughts, "I hope they don't mind me bugging their control room and holding cell, I mean I prefer not to be left out of the loop…"

His train of thought was interrupted however as a loud clang emanated from the phone's camera feed. Back in the control room, the agents including director Goda had set up a defensive perimeter within the room using the desks as cover. Six agents taking cover at the sides of the room with three on each side and having turned the desks to face the sides. At the back was seven agents with Goda being one of them stationed next to the centre. They were all watching the entrance peeking over or around the desks they took cover behind, their rifles cocked and ready. The clanging sound continued to occur before suddenly large red scissor blades pierced the door, closed together then pulled away causing both sides of the door to be cut in half and fall down with a mighty metal thud. The door way remained empty as a heavy silence now descended upon the scene. within the corridor the two servants stood on the left side of the doorway while the large man stood on the right. The large man began crouching before placing his hands flat on the ground. After the man did this crimson threads from the man's suit began running down his arms before meeting the floor and spreading into the control room like roots, crawling their way across the ground.

The man began mumbling quietly as the two servants listened closely, "The threads are detecting blood from the left, right and back. I would say… twelve- no, thirteen."

The large man stood up and the two servants prepared to invade the room. However back in the control room one of the agents looked towards Goda from his right, Goda nodded causing the agent to throw a thread spool through the door. The two servants panickily dodged back while the large man merely remained standing there. The thread spool exploded filling the corridor with smoke, the sound of the explosion sent echoing through the corridors. The two servants managed to avoid the explosion and looked back down the corridor to see the large man standing there. The man seemed rather unscathed having tanked the attack head on.

"Pathetic." The man grumbled as began creating exactly thirteen large crimson scissors.

One of the agents back in the room peeked over from their cover when they saw several of the large scissors suddenly fly out from the smoke. In their panic the agents began firing at the scissors but just like the last squad their shots had no effect. The scissors went on to track down the agents cutting them down one by one before disappearing back into crimson threads. The firing quickly went silent leaving the room in a bloody mess.

Xavier continued to watch in horror through his bug as the man and the two servants began moving into the room. As they approached the central aisle, suddenly from the back of the room director Goda rolled into the centre firing his needle rifle at the large man presumably having dodged the scissor's assault. Several of the needles embedded into the large man's left shoulder, his body contorting from the sudden impact of the shots before the man used his gauntlet to block the rest as he grunted with frustration. One of the servants moved in front of the man and fired at Goda. However the director managed to move behind one of the desks just in time to avoid the enemy's shots. The large man plucked the needles out of his shoulder as the remaining servant joined the other in laying down

cover fire on Goda. The man then formed a larger pair of scissors and held his hand up to signify the servants to cease fire. Goda realised what was happening and moved to dodge, but the scissors came flying quicker than he could react. The two blades of the scissors shot straight through the desks, breaking them apart completely and clamping down on Goda's leg. The hold of the blades were just hard enough to hold Goda in place but not hard enough to cut through his leg, however this was enough to cause Goda to yell in pain as he scratched at the ground trying anything to not be pulled away. The scissors began to float towards the centre of the room dragging Goda across the floor. They then flipped Goda over before moving above Goda's chest before implanting themselves into the ground, holding Goda on the floor within the scissor's vice grip.

The large man walked up to the pinned Goda, even through his helmet he exuded a cold smug demeanour, "Nice try ape, but you just earned yourself a painful death."

Goda tried to laugh through choking breaths to spite the large man, "H-heh… Well I just hope its better than my last pay check…"

The large man didn't respond as he placed his hands on the handles of the large scissors before slowly beginning to close the handles together. Goda tried to clench his teeth but the grunts of his pain broke through. The blades closed further… and further… till suddenly an audible snip rang out and director Goda was cut in two…

The large man stood upright and audibly inhaled, "Ah… Another fool executed from this world…"

The two servants looked at him partially out of intimidation but mostly out of expectation for their next order.

The man turned to the two servants raising his voice, "Well? What the hell are you waiting for?! get into their security systems now!"

The order sparked the two men into hurriedly locating a working computer, one of them finding one then plugging in to the machine a small black laptop via a cable. It took a few moments as the servants continued to access their security, Xavier continued watching, distraught at the loss of director Goda. Eventually one of servants threw a thumbs up signifying their successful intrusion into the facility's security.

As soon as they intruded the systems, Xavier saw the large man pull up a hand held radio up to his helmet, "Alright we're through, now make it quick reinforcements are likely already on their way."

As the man said this, on the other end of the radio was the three servants back at the entity's holding cell who watched as the steel door to the holding cell now slid open. Xavier realised what the man meant and tapped icons on his phone to pull up the feed from his other bug in the holding cell, which saw the creature continuing to sleep and the spotlights flicker on.

The three servants began moving inside the room, Xavier catching one of the servants speaking through his own hand held radio, "Sir how exactly are we supposed to get the entity through the gate?"

Xavier repeated the word "Gate?" As he questioned to himself in his suspicion.

However Xavier's questioning was interrupted by the large man's reply back through the radio, "Just try to lure it through, our allies should be able to secure it on the other side."

One of the other servants waited till the man stopped talking before they began lamenting, "Jesus he doesn't ask much from us does he?"

Another of the servants replying, sharing his comrade's irritation, "yeah well life's full of this kinda shit…"

Back in the control room the large man grumbled as he listened to the servants through the radio, "Idiots…"

One of the servants in the control room tried to get the large man's attention as the other seemed to have set up a camera on a tripod linked to one of the computers, "Sir setting the *device* up is gonna take a bit longer but the other said we're ready to start broadcasting."

The man nodded as he stepped in front of the camera, "Good, lets get started."

One of the servants operated the computer linked to the camera while the other went back to their side of the room, setting up something unseen. The servant operating the camera gestured to the man showing three fingers on his hand, lowering each one each second, closing his hand signifying the beginning of their broadcast.

The man looked directly into the camera through his helmet, his voice firm and filled with malice, "Attention Nudist beach, this is a message from those you know to be the servants of the thread." The man pauses for a moment before continuing, a malicious smile now hearable in his voice, "You may call me… The Executioner."

Beyond the crisis

It was in the morning of the same day as the attack when Mikisugi was relaxing at his house.

He appeared to be taking a call as he responded to some declaration with some held back surprise "What a trip? to Akihabara?"

The voice on the other end of the call belonged to Ryūko who replied with a casual demeanour, "Yup, Satsuki wanted to figure out someway to celebrate the outcome of the race and well Mako has really wanted to visit Akihabara for a while."

Mikisugi scratched his head as he looked rather befuddled, "Do you really have to go today though? We haven't really got any security teams organised for such a trip…"

Ryūko had a shrug in her voice as she answered, "Heh yeah sorry about that, it was kinda a spontaneous thing… But hey! The elite four is coming with, even Nonon! I'm sure they can organise something."

Mikisugi held his chin as he contemplated for a moment, "Hmm… Wait is Nui coming with you?"

Ryūko appeared to become slightly irritated at the mention of Nui, "Er y-yeah I guess she can come why you asking?"

Mikisugi's face changed to a Satisfied smirk, "Perfect! I can assign the agents watching her to act as your security patrol."

Ryūko's voice became monotone unveiling her annoyance, "yeah yeah whatever…"

Mikisugi paused for a moment before responding, his voice now more emotionally sentimental, "You know… I'm proud of you Ryūko,

you've really matured and learn to understand the emotions of people around you, I know its hard to spend to spend so much time around your father's killer but I'm sure he would be proud of how empathetic the brilliant young woman is that you have become."

Ryūko suddenly became flustered, her cheeks glowing a cherry red, "W-what the hell man?! why you getting all sappy for?!"

Mikisugi chuckled before a short moment of silence availed itself to the call.

As the tension cooled, Ryūko seemed to attempt to speak up, her voice sounding tentative with every word, "H-hey… to be honest I… I'm kinda well… worried"

Mikisugi began to show concern however it was tempered by the casual nature of the call, "Worried? about those servant guys?"

Ryūko hesitated, she seemed to audibly struggle to force herself to answer, however she seemed to grumble with frustration, "Ugh never mind, I'll see you guys later…"

Mikisugi appeared somewhat confused by nevertheless attempted to retain a positive tone, "oh alright, well remember if anything happens we got your back."

Ryūko mumbled a simple "Right…" Before hanging up the phone.

Mikisugi lowered his own phone from his face as he let out a sigh of concern. His thoughts trailed off into his worries however they were interrupted by the sudden ringing of his door bell.

"Yeah gimme a sec!" He called out as he casually pushed himself off from his sofa.

He moved through his mess filled apartment, walking between strewn clothing, various left about cans along with other bits and

pieces. He stumbled for a moment after stepping on something presumably sharp.

The door bell rang out through out the apartment once again provoking an irritated, "Yeah yeah I'm coming!" From Mikisugi. He quickly opened the door as soon as he reached it, "Yeah?"

Beyond the door was Tsumugu, and before Mikisugi could question why he was here Tsumugu answered simply by raising his arm revealing him to be holding a six pack of beer.

Mikisugi let out an amused sigh as he turned his back to head back inside the apartment, "well damn I wasn't expecting you to show up."

Tsumugu followed him inside the apartment, his face baring an unusual casual demeanour, "Yeah well we're both off the clock so I thought might as well…"

The two made their way into the apartment, with Tsumugu crashing down on the leather sofa while Mikisugi seated himself in a separate adjacent matching leather chair. Tsumugu pulled out a bottle opener, sliding it onto the lid of the bottle before pulling it to let the lid come loose letting out a satisfying fizzling sound, he then passed the bottle opener to Mikisugi who then did the same.

Tsumugu took a little look a the apartment before turning back to Mikisugi, "Damn are you ever gonna clean this place?"

Mikisugi retorted back with a condescending smirk, "Oh please your place is just as bad, and besides, I know where everything is I need in here is."

Tsumugu smirked as well while he gestured by angling his beer bottle to be slightly pointing in Mikisugi's direction, "There you go again, pretending you got all your shit together, when you got no clue what you're doing."

Mikisugi continued smirking as he threw the shade back in Tsumugu's direction, "Well pot meet kettle, when said shit hits the fan, you're panicking just as much as me."

The two went silent. The room joining them in the quiet. Before suddenly they shared a collective chuckle, relieving the scene of any supposed tension.

Tsumugu took another swig of his beer, "you're really loud y'know?"

Mikisugi took a swig of his own before responding with a simple, "oh yeah?"

Tsumugu seemed to grumble his reply with irritation, "yeah, I could hear you talkin' from the halfway across the walkway, couldn't hear what you were saying though."

Mikisugi shrugged before taking another sip of his beer, "Oh it was just a call from Ryūko, apparently her, Satsuki, Mako, the elite four and even Hōōmaru are heading on a trip to Akihabara, some kinda celebration for a school race or something."

Tsumugu raised his eyebrows as he took his own sip, "Really now? What's their security detail?"

Mikisugi's body language seemed to shift awkwardly as he tried to get out an answer, "Er well I'm sorry I should of mentioned, Nui Harime is gonna be going with them too so I'm gonna assign the team watching her to act as their security detail."

As Tsumugu replied the disdain was audible in his voice, "Nui huh? You sure that's a good idea?"

Mikisugi shifted awkwardly feeling actual tension arise in the air, "W-well I just thought that it would make for a convenient solution to the security issue…"

Tsumugu placed his bottle on the coffee table in front of them before crossing his arms, "You're placing all your eggs in one basket, all it will take is one hit to knock 'em all down."

Mikisugi placed down his own beer with a sigh of exasperation, "I don't know if that analogy works here when two of said eggs are life fiber infused super humans while the rest are pretty strong in their own right."

Tsumugu gestured with his hand as he seemed to grow frustrated "Jesus Aikurō! they already demonstrated that they can take us on and you're acting so god damn casual about this shit, even with Nui who could be working with the enemy for all we know."

Mikisugi was taken aback for a moment. He knew Tsumugu had some issues with the current way operations were going but to suddenly fall into an outburst like this was beyond Mikisugi's expectations.

"We've already seen how they have tried to attack Nui, and You're still putting the blame on her?"

Tsumugu seemed to grow angrier as he seemed desperate to sway his friend, "You know damn well that it could have been a ploy to get us closer to trusting Nui and by the sounds of things it could have worked! Why the hell are you freaking comfortable having her around?!"

Mikisugi grew defensive in his response, "I see potential in her alright?! She can be more than what she is."

Tsumugu's voice was now akin to a growl, "Even after everything she's done?!"

Mikisugi became solemn as he looked Tsumugu dead in the eyes, "Yes."

Tsumugu sat back in his seat dumb founded, "So its true…"

Mikisugi shifted to confused frustration, "So what's true?!"

Tsumugu closed his eyes and lowered his head, "you've gone soft…"

"She's just a kid!" Mikisugi snapped back, "Raised her whole life to look down on humans, believing that what she was doing was right!"

"Even if that's true…" Tsumugu glared at Mikisugi, "She still killed Isshin."

Mikisugi grit his teeth, the pain bubbling up to the surface, "And I killed one of our friends too…"

Tsumugu was quick to retort, "You didn't have a choice!"

"Yes I did!" Mikisugi shouted before simmering down back to solemnness, "And even if I didn't… I still pulled that trigger."

Tsumugu held back his frustrated rage, unable to answer.

Mikisugi then looked back up at Tsumugu, holding his cold determination in his gaze, "He was my friend, and now… its Nui, so I can assure you, if I have to pull that trigger again, I will, but please… Just give me a chance."

A moment of silence invaded the room. The two allowing the mood to settle.

Tsumugu picked up his beer from the coffee table and took a sip, "Ugh, its flat."

The silence returned for a moment before the sounds of Mikisugi attempting to hold in his laughter started filling the scene. Tsumugu was surprised to see him suddenly on the verge of laughter but started to laugh himself. The two shared a chuckle together alleviating the room of all tension.

Mikisugi began to speak, sentimentality filled every one of his words, "you know, years ago I thought we would never be able to laugh

again like that…"

Tsumugu threw out a simple "Yeah…" he himself delving into similar nostalgia.

"I realised, even when shit has gotten fucked up, you need to laugh like that or the world will get you down, you know?" Mikisugi seemed lost in thought as he looked downwards, each of his words seemed filled with a cocktail of emotions while his face showed a saddened smile.

Tsumugu grabbed two bottles from the six pack before undoing the lids. He passed one to Mikisugi and the two tapped their bottles together causing a Klink to ring out through the room.

The two men spent quite a bit of time relaxing in the room, recounting old stories and discussing various things such as hobbies and recent events regarding the people at work, the morning soon becoming afternoon.

"And about tha-" Mikisugi interrupted himself mid conversation as he suddenly noticed his phone ringing. He picked up his phone quickly after he noticed it was a work number, "Hey I'm sure this might be a pretty annoying problem but are you sure you can't sort it out yourself? Its my day off."

Mikisugi continued holding his phone against his ear as Tsumugu observed him curiously as he sat back in his seat.

Mikisugi's face slowly changed as the situation dawned upon him, "What?!"

Tsumugu's curiosity now shifted to concern, "What's going on?"

Mikisugi gave one last answer into the phone, "Alright we'll be right over." He then put down the phone before turning to Tsumugu, "There's been an attack on the American base, its the servants."

Tsumugu hurried to get out of his seat with an frustrated "Shit."

The two men quickly made their way out of the apartment and onto their separate vehicles and made their way off to The Nudist beach HQ.

As soon as they reached the HQ they made their way towards the main elevator, Nudist beach agents were lined up into a corridor-like formation, saluting as Tsumugu and Mikisugi walked past. The elevator was empty, Mikisugi stepping inside first before turning to the control panel, while Tsumugu was close behind. Mikisugi selected the option for "Crisis centre." Causing the elevator doors to close and the elevator itself to begin rumbling, with the movement suggesting it was moving upwards. The elevator dinged as it arrived revealing a large corridor with several doors situated by concrete pillars. Many nudist beach agents moving from door to door as they completed a chatted hurriedly to each other causing the room to be filled with a chaotic bombardment of noise, however each of the agents would salute to Mikisugi and Tsumugu as they passed through the room. The two approached a Large double steel door at the end the room, Mikisugi unlocking it with hand scan on a left side panel. The doors slid open to reveal a room with a similar design to the control room within the American nudist beach base. Multiple rows of desks melded together holding monitors with an agent sitting in front of every one of the monitors, all working frantically to solve the current situation. Of course at the back of the room was a large screen displaying a multitude of images, some being long distance feeds of the base while the largest one was a feed moving closer to the base at a moderate speed.

An agent immediately saluted to Mikisugi and Tsumugu as they entered with Mikisugi walking past the agent as he stared at the screen, "Mikisugi sir!" The agent declared in a respectful tone.

"What's the full situation?" Mikisugi questioned coldly and professionally.

The agent gestured calmly to the screen, "We received a distress message from the American base that an unknown helicopter breached the restricted air space and proceeded to eliminate the base's anti air defences with some unknown projectile weaponry. The assaulting force then proceeded to drop 5 troops and one abnormal individual from the helicopter into the facility, its noted that they bare the appearance of the troops belonging to the servants of the thread."

Mikisugi placed his hand to his chin, "An abnormal individual?"

The agent nodded, "Yes sir, The description we received was that of an exceedingly large male looking individual wearing a suit and a strange helmet along with matching strange gauntlets. The last message we received was that they were going to intercept the opposing force and a request for reinforcements before they went radio silent."

The agent gestured to the main feed at the back causing the largest image to grow, filling the entirety of the large screen, "This feed is from the reinforcements currently in a helicopter en-route to the facility."

"Damn this is bad…" Mikisugi grumbled before grinding his teeth with frustration.

Tsumugu stepped forward, turning to the agent, "Do we have any intel on this projectile weapon of theirs?"

The agent looked troubled at the mention of this question, no sir, well at least not information we're sure off…"

Tsumugu met this question with confusion, "Hm? what do you mean?"

The agent nervously attempted to explain, "Well we're not sure how accurate this is but in the distress message they eluded to something along the lines of giant scissors…"

Tsumugu's confusion deepened, "Giant scissors?"

"Mikisugi sir!" Suddenly one of the agents in front of the lines of desks shouted out.

Mikisugi quickly replied firmly, "What is it?"

The agent continued with a professional tone, "We're detecting an out going video broadcast originating from within the facility!"

Mikisugi paused for a moment letting the surprise settle into the room before replying with a stern order, "Alright put it up!"

The video of the helicopter feed was then replaced with a different feed, this being a video which's image replaced the surprise in the room with intimidation. It was the crimson helmet of the large man with the servants of the thread filling a majority of the screen.

A deep voice emanated from within the dark space of the crimson helmet, "Attention Nudist beach, this is a message from those you know to be the servants of the thread. You may call me the Executioner." The voice continued, it's tone was grim and malicious, "We are messaging you to notify you of our taking over of this facility, you see we have observed your foolish acts to rid the world of it's true nature and so no matter how many lives we take from your ridiculous organisation, it can never atone for the crimes you have committed."

Tsumugu's resentment grew within his furious gaze, while Mikisugi continued staring onward within his cold professionalism.

The Executioner continued, musing with a smug brevity in his voice, "I also have a message for the traitorous Nui Harime, do not attempt to seek allies within us, we know of your failures and your exiled position from the life fiber collective, and we would rather live in the disgusting excuse for human society than accept you into our ranks."

Tsumugu scoffed with irritation, "Tch like hell I'm gonna believe that."

Suddenly another agent in the room shouted out to Mikisugi, "Sir! the reinforcements are touching down within the facility!"

Mikisugi answered the agent with another calm, calculated order, "Understood, tell them to be careful and make their way to the control room."

The agent quickly responded with "Yes sir!" As the helicopter opened up to allow the armed agents to make their way into the facility's inner sanctum.

As all of the commotion continued, The doctor, Xavier Natrium still resided within the American facility's panic room.

"So it is the servants…" He had been listening to the Executioner broadcasting his message through the feed from the bugs the professor planted.

"Sir! The Nudist beach reinforcements have arrived!" Suddenly one of the servant soldiers yelled out.

The Executioner nodded to the servant before turning back to the camera feed, "I hope you come to regret ever defying the natural order of the universe. We'll be seeing you again real soon, naked apes."

The same servant as before shouted out again, "Ok we're off the air."

The Executioner proceeded to pull up a radio, "Alright its almost time, are we ready with the beacons? Over."

"Beacons?" The doctor's face was filled with confusion for a second till the realisation arrived.

He quickly changed the feed on his phone over to the bug placed in the life fiber entity's containment room.

"Yes sir, we're going to lure it into the gateway now." One of the three servants replied into their own radio. It seems the servants has

planted four needles about the size of batons into the floor of the chamber.

Another one of the servants stood in front of the glass barrier between him and the entity. The creature roused as it seemed to to detect the individual making the servant visibly nervous. Suddenly the professor's eyes began to widen with shock as he started to witness the purpose for those needles. A large red thread appeared in the air above one of the needles situated in the center. The thread then began to separate into many threads, the threads forming a window in the air reaching towards the ground. The window wasn't square shaped by was quite miss sharpened with about six sides, some longer than others, however what drew the doctor's attention the most, was that on the other side of the window was a room that was not the containment chamber. It was a portal. One of the servants off to the side threw up a thumbs up as the glass barrier proceeded to open up into two sliding doors. The servant standing in the center managed to gain the entity's attention, causing the creature to rise up from it's resting position to crawl and attack them. The servant began running into the portal and the entity followed them close behind. As soon as the entity entered the portal, the threads of the window closed together and disappeared. Two more smaller portals opened up above the other needles as the two remaining servants casually approached them.

One of the servants picked up the central needle out of the floor while the other one spoke into his radio, "Alright, we've acquired the target, currently evacuating."

The doctor's fear began to rise as he realised what was happening.

Xavier Hurriedly switched the feed off from his phone and selected the call option before locating Mikisugi's number.

"Come on… come on…" He uttered to himself in his panic. A voice notification informing him of the charges for international calls came from the phone, the doctor replying back in his frustration, "I'll pay the damn fee just get me through right now!"

Back in the Japanese HQ after the Executioner's last line, his broadcast shut off and now Mikisugi and Tsumugu along with the other agents were watching through camera feeds on the body's of the reinforcement agents who were making their way through the facility. The agents were approaching the control room of the American facility. They went inside, weapons raised as they were getting ready for a full fire fight. However… All of the squad of agents were confused as they found the control room completely empty. This same confusion resounding through the room of the Japanese HQ leaving it almost deafeningly silent. The silence was pierced however, as Mikisugi's phone began to ring.

A sweat was visible on Mikisugi's forehead as he hesitantly pulled up his phone, "H… Hello?"

"Its me Xavier, I'm in the panic room of the American facility, get your men out of there right now!" The professor spoke with a frenzied pace and the fear was audible in his voice.

Xavier's tone further confused Mikisugi however, "What?"

Xavier raised his voice, "LISTEN the servants are capable of teleporting! I think your men are in danger!"

Mikisugi's eyes widened as he suddenly shouted to one of the agents at the desks, "Tell them to get out of there now!"

As this was going on The reinforcement agents in the American HQ were exploring the control room, and as Mikisugi was shouting for them to get out of there, one of the agents found something beneath one of the desks. It appeared to be a device of sorts with a subtle camera at the front. The realisation hit the agent as terror filled his face when…

Every one of the agent's feeds went out at once, reports coming in from agents observing the facility from a distance stating that a large explosion decimated the building.

The room was once again silent, but instead of confusion, pure terror now filled the control center. Tsumugu's face was filled with cold fury while Mikisugi immediately pulled up his phone.

"Xavier?! Are you there?! Professor!" However there was no reply.

Mikisugi found a seat before sitting down, holding his chin with a hunched over position, his desperation coming through his body language.

Suddenly Mikisugi stood up with another realisation, as he proceeded to dial in a new number into his phone, "Come on… come on…" He uttered with frustration as he held his phone against his ear.

Tsumugu looked at him with concern, "What is it?"

However Mikisugi didn't answer him as he pulled his phone away from his ear, "Dammit Ryūko!" He went to dial another number into his phone and once again holding it against his ear. He then shouted to the entirety of the room, "Get every available agent to Akihabara now!"

Tsumugu began to understand as he started to reflect Mikisugi's worry, "Shit…" He moved to Mikisugi's side, "I'll head there too." before running out of the room.

Mikisugi gave Tsumugu a quick nod, "Come on, Pick up… pick up…" his worry turning to panic.

One hell of a trip

On the morning of the same day as the attack, clone Nui slept soundly in her sunlight filled hotel room. The light turning the sight of the room into an almost heavenly vision, with her stark white bed sheets and pale blue coloured walls. Nui yawned as she sat up within her bed while stretching out her arms with satisfaction, her voice comparable to a kitten nudged awake by her mother. She looked about the room, clothes strewn around her bed room, while across the open plan space she could see the kotatsu in front of the TV kept in a semi tidy condition. She smiled warmly before looking out the window the bask in the beautiful day.

"NUI!" Suddenly, her gaze was met with Gamagōri's stern face intensely staring at her from outside the window.

Of course, clone Nui started screaming. She switched over to true Nui who seemed to wake up for a moment with an expression of confusion before the crimson fibers surrounded her as clone Nui switched back into the room.

"Oh its just you Gamagōri…" Nui sighed, her voice a mix of relief and exasperation. However she perked up as the realisation hit her, "Wait why and how are you outside my window!? we're five stories up!"

Suddenly a foot kicks open her hotel door, causing Nui to scream once again. This time the people approaching was the others of the elite four, Inumuta, Uzu and even Nonon, with Uzu being the one who kicked open the door. They were all wearing casual clothing, Nonon in a reddish pink dress along with a dark pink poofy hat. Inumuta wore his usual style of dark blue turtle neck and Uzu had jeans with a green jacket over a dark green T shirt.

"He's on a window cleaner's lift" Uzu spoke up to answer Nui's question before turning to Gamagōri, "I told you it was a stupid idea!"

Gamagōri replied, his bellowing voice distorted from trying to get through the window, "She needs to be prepared for any scenario and any point attack Sanageyama!"

Nui ignored the strange interactions to get to the more pressing matters, her surprise settling into confusion, "Why are you guys here anyway?"

Nonon answered as she began to rummage around Nui's possessions, casually throwing around in random directions items that didn't interest her, "The reason for that new girl is that you've been invited to a trip."

Nui shot a look of concern for her items at Nonon before turning back to the group as a whole, "A trip?"

This time it was Inumuta who responded as he continued to tap at a furious speed into his phone, "Indeed, to Akihabara no less which was a suggestion of Mankanshoku, although the trip as a whole was conceived by lady Satsuki." Inumuta looked up from his phone before pushing up his glasses unveiling the slightest hint of irritation, "Now while I am usually opposed to going to crowded areas for luxury reasons, I can't exactly refuse Satsuki's desire for me to accompany them and well since you're coming along, I can get plenty of data…"

Uzu suddenly threw his arm over Inumuta's shoulder, chuckling with his usual buddy buddy attitude, "Ah bullshit! You're just too proud to admit that you want to come with to have fun."

"What have I told you about personal space Sanageyama…" Inumuta closed his eyes with his annoyed expression growing more intense causing Uzu to slowly back off cautiously.

Nui seemed to understand the situation now, however what confusion she had then turned to worry, "huh… But wait what about Nudist beach? Are they alright with me coming along?"

Nonon continued to look through the various objects littered by Nui's bed, "Actually it was Mikisugi who suggested that you come along, something about assigning the team watching you to act as the security detail for the trip." She then seems to grow proudly smug, "Heh as if we will need a security detail with the elite four around." After she finished speaking, she seemed to blush as she picked up a pair of pink frilly panties.

Nui appeared to react similarly, becoming flushed before quickly grabbing the panties out of Nonon's hands. She then took a second to calm down as the awkwardness settled into the scene before she finally answered, "Well… I guess I can come along, although I'm gonna need a little time to get ready…"

The room went quiet again as the information processed through each of the minds of the elite four, in particular for the male members. The moment passed and the realisation hit.

"O-oh! Right yeah come on guys lets er, wait down stairs…" Uzu would be the first to speak up. He then proceeded to push Inumuta out the door who continued to tap into his phone uncaringly letting his feet drag across the floor.

"Very well, but don't take too long, lady Satsuki is waiting." Gamagōri ordered, his voice again faded by attempting to reach through the glass of the window. He started to slowly lower as the mechanical buzz of the lift he stood in was audible within the room.

As soon as Gamagōri was gone, Nui turned to Nonon who didn't seem to be in any hurry to leave, "Erm… Nonon?"

"Oh relax Nui, we're both girls aren't we?" Nonon replied as she casually flung another one of Nui's articles of clothing across the room.

Seemingly rather troubled by the situation, Nui could only eke out a quiet "Oh… ok…"

What proceeded was an awkward trial for Nui. She got out of her PJs, an act that seemed to aggravate Nonon who observed Nui's figure with envy. Then what came was a quick shower and practically a fashion show where Nonon instructed clone Nui on what to wear, with perhaps surprisingly true Nui commending Nonon on her choices of clothing. After what must had felt like an hour later clone Nui and Nonon finally made their way into the plaza. Nui ended up wearing a pink summer dress with white poke dots and a sun hat with a pink velvet strip.

Uzu spoke up in response to the two girl's arrival with an exasperated expression, "Jesus what took you so long?!"

Nonon pouted with irritated smug superiority, "Hmph! I didn't expect you to have class but you should at least know to never rush a woman getting ready."

This only seemed to frustrate Uzu, "Huh?!-"

"It's alright Sanageyama." However he was suddenly interrupted by Gamagōri, who was partially collapsed and looked like he was on the verge of a heart attack. He then gathered himself to continue, "Satsuki took this possibility into account and are waiting at a café."

Uzu seemed to become confused with a noticeable sweat on his head but he appeared to accept this, "O-oh alright…" Inumuta was standing close behind him, watching Gamagōri, a glimmer in his glasses and a smug smile of understanding on his face.

Outside the hotel the world was filled with the summer sun's light, making every colour vibrant and filled with life as people made their way through park walk ways and across the city streets for various reasons. many of said reasons being luxury, with many preteens and adults alike out shopping while others visited arcades and loitered about on the streets, while others made their way to work or are currently at work, serving customers, on a lunch break and various other activities.

"Jeez why the hell ain't they here yet?!" Ryūko shouted out sitting at a café situated across the city from the hotel.

She was sitting outside across from Satsuki who calmly sipped on a cup of hot chocolate and Mako who casually chowed down on a multitude of croissants and various other sweet treats. Ryūko was wearing her classic casual clothing with jeans and her skull baring jacket, while Satsuki went for a more more stylish look which served to surprise Ryūko as she wore what would usually be seen in a night club, that being tight black pants, a white jacket and a dark blue crop top revealing their belly just beneath. To add further surprise Satsuki had her hair done up into a pony tail, something Ryūko thought Satsuki always disliked. Mako was more relaxed with her choice of style, light pink shorts and a light yellow T shirt which depicted two sumo wrestlers playing patty cake at a tea party, it is Mako after all.

"Calm yourself Ryūko, we did spring this on her quite suddenly and we are pretty far from the hotel." Satsuki spoke trying to relax her rowdy sister before taking a sip of her hot chocolate, she then sighed with satisfaction as she placed her cup back onto the table.

Ryūko stared at Satsuki with a relaxed glare filled with irritation, "I still can't believe we went all the way across the city just so you can have that drink…"

Satsuki shrugged with a smug expression, "Well I've taken quite a liking to it after all."

Ryūko excused the half-assed answer as other things were on her mind, "Also… what's with those clothes?"

Satsuki seemed somewhat taken aback by Ryūko's sudden question, "Oh do you not like it? I was thinking that it would be fitting to wear to Akihabara…"

"what Akihabara you've been to?" Ryūko replied with a bemused expression, much to Satsuki's flushed embarrassment.

Mako suddenly interjected still chewing on a croissant, "Who cares!? That outfit is SUPER sexy!" Mako's eyes suddenly lit up as she grew incredibly energetic, "Sugar rush!" However she immediately grabbed her head in pain, "Sugar crash…"

"Well you all look like you're having a fun time." Uzu spoke up as he and the others of the elite 4 and clone Nui approached the Café seeing the three sitting at the table.

Satsuki stood up with a relaxed joyful expression in response to their arrival, "Ah you've arrived."

Ryūko added on in exasperation, "Well about time…"

Gamagōri bowed to the three sitting at the table eyes closed, "My apologies about our late arrival."

"Hey Gamagōriiiiiiii!" Mako proceeded to jump up from her seat and was all of a sudden sitting on Gamagōri's shoulder hugging his face.

The sudden pouncing of course provoked an embarrassed blush from the towering Gamagōri "Mankanshoku!? I've told you to stop doing that!"

Nonon ignored the interactions from the others as she was immediately drawn to Satsuki. Her eyes lit up and a slight blush appeared on her cheeks from viewing Satsuki's clothing, "Lady Satsuki t-that's quite the outfit."

Clone Nui also reacted in a similar way as Nonon to the appearance of Satsuki, merely staring with a flushed expression. While true Nui floated in her ghostly form above, spectating with a bemused yet sultry gaze.

Satsuki sighed almost in fatigue from her own embarrassment, "Lets just say that it was a wardrobe malfunction…"

Ryūko bared a wickedly sly smile as she added to Satsuki's statement "More like wardrobe misconception." Much to the older sister's irritation.

Nui stepped forward grabbing the attention of the rest of the group, "Sorry to interrupt but what's the planned transport to Akihabara? We taking a train? Or are we gonna be escorted by Nudist beach agents?"

Inumuta would be the next to step forth as he continued to look into this phone, "Actually according to this, the answer to your question should be arriving right… Now."

Almost in response, A large black limo pulled up by the side of the road. Nui stared in awe as she had never seen such a fancy vehicle.

However before Nui had a chance to wonder who would be driving, door at the front of the limo opened and Rei Hōōmaru stepped out. She was wearing the same attire of blue and white striped theme suit jacket and tight dress with a matching tie and white knee socks.

As soon as she stepped out her stern gaze was focused on Nui before she quickly turned to Satsuki giving her a calm short bow, "I apologise for being late lady Satsuki, traffic appears to be quite heavy today."

Satsuki nodded respectfully, "No worries, in fact, by luck you are just in time."

"I see…" Rei stood upright before turning her gaze once again to Nui.

Nui noticed this time wondering what was on Rei's mind. However Rei upon making eye contact with clone Nui suddenly turned away.

Hōōmaru walked to the back end of the Limo on the side facing the Café before opening the side door, "Please make your way inside in

a calm and orderly manner, and this is a lease, so do try to avoid making mess."

The group made their way inside, Mako and Nui looking amazed as they entered. Gamagōri in his immense size struggled to fit through the door, with him only getting inside via a swift kick to the back from Uzu, who gave a little salute with two fingers to Rei as he entered. Next was Inumuta who didn't raise his head from his phone except to give a swift Nod in Rei's direction. And next was Nonon and Ryūko who appeared to be trading snide comments playfully each other. Last was Satsuki who gave a respectful bow, which was returned by Hōōmaru before Satsuki gently stepped inside. Rei then shut the door and made her way back up to the front of the limo, opening and stepping inside the drivers seat. And with the limo turning out of the parking spot, the group were on their way to Akihabara.

It was a long journey with an unusually high amount of traffic. Many of of the group becoming frustrated enough that some were considering getting out and walking to Akihabara.

"WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT TURN!? Can't you see I'm indicating here?!" Suddenly Rei shouted angrily from the drivers seat, however her face froze with regret as she realised the window at the back of the drivers compartment was rolling down.

"Er… Rei? Is everything alright?" Satsuki peered through, almost intimidated but mostly concerned. The others of the group shared similar looks of awkward worry due to Rei's sudden outburst.

Rei collected herself building back to her calm and stone cold demeanour as she continued to look onward through the front of the vehicle, continuing to drive, "Yes I apologise about the commotion, things are… difficult at the moment."

A drop sweat roles down Satsuki's forehead as she continued shooting an awkward look towards Hōōmaru, "I see… Well do try not to stress yourself out, we should still have plenty of time to get to Akihabara for us to enjoy our visit."

Eventually after another agonising hour, the group did arrive in Akihabara. They found a parking spot before stepping out onto the bustling streets. Countless civilians made their way through, these ranging from men and women in business suits many of which speaking hurriedly into their phones, trendy dressed youngsters typing into their own phones casually while some just walked whisk-fully wearing headphones, and many other kinds of people you would expect to see in such a part of Tokyo. With the exception of the large open spaces filled with people, streets were mostly running through grids of large block shaped buildings and sky scrapers which is about par for the course in these kind of areas of course. These buildings was plastered with various images all of which advertisements of some kind, either for electronics, anime or food and sometimes bizarrely enough a combination of all of the above.

Mako was the one to make it out of the limo first, running out open mouthed as she took in her surroundings in awe, "WOOOOOOAH this is even cooler than I expected!"

Ryūko followed suit, watching Mako in bemusement, "I don't know why you're so excited about this Mako, I mean it's just another part of Tokyo."

Mako turned back to her friend almost offended, "Just another part of Tokyo?! Akihabara is the peak of modern Japanese consumerism! It has fancy cafés with cute girls in maid outfits. amazing electronic stores, manga and even stores entirely devoted to plastic models! At least I think there is, since I only heard about it from other people and even if I did get to go I probably wouldn't be able buy anything…"

Satsuki approached the two with the others of the group following close behind, Satsuki staring up at the soaring heights of the builds surrounding them, "Well you don't have to worry about money today, I'll be taking care of that."

Ryūko seemed to react to this with cautious worry, "Sis' are you sure that's a good-"

However she was suddenly cut off by Mako running up joyfully and wrapping her arms around Satsuki, "Oh my gosh! Thank you Satsuki!"

Satsuki returned the hug with closed eyed satisfaction, "you're very welcome Mako." She then turned her head to the group behind her, "Gamagōri? I don't wish to burden you too much, but as the strongest of the group could you assist in holding some of our heavier bags?"

Gamagōri nodded respectfully, "Of course lady Satsuki."

Uzu looked at Gamagōri with a sly smile, "Heh looks like you got a real trial ahead of you Ira."

Gamagōri seemed to ignore this as he instead turned to Nui, "Harime?"

Clone Nui was looking about curiously before anxiety hit her when she realised she was being spoken to, "Y-yes?!"

Gamagōri disregarded her reaction, responding calmly, "Would you like my assistance with holding your bags as well?"

Nui waved her hands out worriedly, "O-oh its ok I don't plan to be buying much anyway…"

The elite four stared at Nui in confusion with Nonon being the first to speak up, her voice filled with disappointment. "Really?"

Uzu added on as he quickly moved behind Nui to clasp his hands on her shoulders, "Yeah Nui! You don't wanna waste an opportunity like this!"

Nui panicked as she looked around at the group, "Oh no please, I don't wanna be a burden…"

Her pleading was met with shrugs from Uzu and Gamagōri, while Nonon continued looking at Nui with confusion and Inumuta's

attention had already returned to his phone.

The elite four moved to join the others. Clone Nui was going to follow before true Nui appeared by her shoulder, lounging in the air comfortably, "You know this might be the one time I agree with the Elite three…"

Clone Nui looked at her doppelganger with first irritation but then intrigue, "Its elite four, and what do you mean?"

True Nui rolled her eye with derision, "Jeez how dense are you? This offer of helping you buy stuff is your "in!"

Clone Nui stared back with confusion, "My in?"

True Nui's frustration intensified, "Your in on the group's social circle! damn not even I'm this socially inept…"

Clone Nui turned her head to look at the others of the group, her eye filled a cocktail of emotions from longing to guilt. She contemplated for a short moment before responding, "I haven't earned it… I haven't proven I deserve it, at least… not to myself."

True Nui looked to the side and sighed, "Ugh that's so dreadfully idealistic…" She then disappeared leaving clone Nui, who ignoring true Nui's last remark, walked onward to join the rest of the group.

The visit to Akihabara began, the group traversing the populated area as their sights were filled with the colours of the various advertisements and colourful individuals. They walked passed nerdy guys carrying several bags filled with various tech and anime merchandise, A group of young energetic girls running into arcades, one dropping their ice cream on the way inside and many men and women in business suits which made the nudist beach squad tailing the group exceedingly weary.

Their first stop was at a tech store. Finally Inumuta's attention was swiftly grabbed away from his phone, however he soon showed

immense disappointment at the selection of the store. Satsuki stuck by Ryūko who marvelled in confusion at the specs listed of a laptop.

Ryūko turned her head to locate Inumuta among the narrow isles of the tech shop, "Hey er… Inumuta? Is this good?"

Satsuki narrowed her eyes, peering inquisitively into the specs herself as Inumuta made his way over, squeezing past uzu who was browsing the shop's music player selection.

Inumuta took a quick look at the specs himself before replying, "Hm, its… alright I guess however for that price I would expect at least a terabyte of storage, 3.7 MHZ and much better resolution."

Ryūko now stared at Inumuta in a deeper confusion.

Seemingly in response, Nonon walked up to Inumuta's side, "Hey nerd! you may want to dumb it down a bit for her."

Inumuta sighed deeply, his irritation incredibly apparent, "Its… fine."

Meanwhile Mako seemed to bounce around the store at a ferocious speed, staring in marvel at each of the displays, "I want this one and I want this one and I want this one and this one and this one!"

Gamagōri, who struggled to fit his massive stature in the shop's tight area, shouting over to Mako in a commanding and even slightly concerned tone, "Stop it right now Mankanshoku! There's not enough room in the shop to move around like that!" However his efforts were in vain as Mako continued bouncing around the shop.

Back at the entrance to the store, Clone Nui stood looking curiously around the chaotic scene. True Nui appeared by her side floating in the air also looking about although she had a look of disdain.

Clone Nui turned to her right to see a camera on display, her eye brightened as she had an idea and picked up the camera before pointing it towards true Nui, however she was soon disappointed as

nothing appeared in the feed. She then turned back to use the camera to peer through the glass door entrance of the shop to see Rei standing outside.

Clone Nui stared at her for a couple of seconds before suddenly being interrupted by an exasperated sigh from true Nui, "Ugh… this is such a waste of time…"

Clone Nui questioned with her own level of exasperation as she placed the camera back in the display, "What? You not into this kind of stuff?"

True Nui rolled her eye as she continued to float in the air, her elbow placed on one knee up as she propped her head on her hand, "Something like that I suppose…"

Clone Nui smiled sombrely, "You know, you might enjoy this a bit more if you relaxed and let loose a bit."

True Nui watched on at the group within the store only to see the displays collapse upon each other from Mako's bouncing creating an even more chaotic scene, "hm… I'll pass."

The group, after assisting with the cleaning up of the shop, made their way to their next destination, this time a Maid café, the pink stylings of the store front and a sign featuring two cat girl maids playing with a ball of string made it ever apparent what was instore for the group.

"You sure you wanna go here Mako? I hear there's a convention goin' on down the street, maybe we could go there instead?" Ryūko questioned awkwardly as she looked at the café in nervous anticipation.

Mako turned to Ryūko in her usual over the top excitement, "Are you kidding me?! you can't visit Akihabara without going to at least one maid café!"

Ryūko sighed with exasperation, "Alright fine…"

Satsuki placed her arm around Ryūko's shoulder attempting to console her sister, "Don't worry I'm sure it won't be too bad."

Upon entering and asking for a table, they were guided by a girl with short blonde hair wearing a black and white styled frilly outfit and a hair band with cat ears, she bore a stern look like she looked down on everyone around her, "Sit yourselves down you pigs!" She gestured towards a large pink heart shaped tabled surrounded by dozens of chairs with heart shaped seats and back rests.

The awkwardness set in as the group sat together, Nonon being the first to speak up as she picked up a menu from the table, the menu baring several depictions of cat girl maids making heart shaped symbols with their hands, "Jeez I like pink and all but this is starting to hurt my eyes…"

This remark wasn't without reason either, as the walls, the other furnishings and even the floor was various shades of pink, the saturation of these colours making the black and white outfits stand out from throughout the café.

"You sure Nonon?" Uzu smiled with smug playfulness "I bet you would make a great tsundere maid, maybe you should make an application!" As expected a Menu came flying in to Uzu's face.

Conversation began to flourish among the group, Mako of course attempting to order everything on the menu while Satsuki attempted to dissuade her and Ryūko watched in bemusement. Arguments continued between Uzu and Nonon while Gamagōri sat between them attempting to disrupt the two's banter. Inumuta simply sat beside them tapping into his phone at furious speeds while showing mild irritation to the ruckus beside him. Clone Nui sat in between the elite 4 a few paces away from Inumuta and next to Satsuki, Mako and Ryūko. Her position at the table leaving her feeling rather out of place as she simply sat and smiled awkwardly.

Meanwhile True Nui looking about casually in her ghostly form noticed a rather timid looking brunette maid about to walk past. True Nui's face quickly twisted into a mischievous smile. She waited for the maid to just reach past where clone Nui was sitting before suddenly becoming a blood form and snatching the hair band off the maid's head, clone Nui of course shivering convulsing at the blood suddenly leaving her body.

it took a moment for the maid to realise she was missing her hair band to the point she had already just passed Inumuta. She began panicking looking about worriedly for her head band when she stepped on the menu that was thrown which was now on the floor.

She quickly slipped on the menu and began tumbling towards the ground. Suddenly, to everyone's surprise, Inumuta rushed out of his seat catching the maid wrapping his arm around her waist. The scene went silent as the group around the table stared in shock at Inumuta holding the maid to prevent her from falling.

Inumuta looked the maid in the eyes with his usual cold distant glare, "Are you alright?"

The maid blushed slightly as she looked back in amazed reverence, "u-uh yeah…"

Inumuta offered the maid his hand which she tentatively grabbed as Inumuta helped her back to her feet. The maid quickly tried to compose herself before walking away her face a bright red. Inumuta meanwhile quietly and calmly sitting back down in his seat.

Uzu looked at Inumuta with the same awkward surprise as before, a bead sweat dropping down one side of his forehead, "y-yo you good dude…?"

Un-phased, Inumuta returned his own look towards Uzu, "Yes I'm fine, by the way are we going to order soon? If so I would like a slice of strawberry cheese cake."

Looked back towards the table attempting to move past what had occurred, "O-oh alright…"

Ryūko spectated the interactions casually, however her attention was drawn away as she realised a cat ear maid hair band on her head which filled her with mild confusion.

Beyond the café, amidst the steel jungle of Akihabara's towering buildings, an individual sat within the heights of an unfinished sky scraper. It was a male figure wearing a dark purple suit jacket over a white shirt and black tie along with matching purple suit trousers. Perhaps bizarrely the individual had a hood the same colour of his suit attached to the jacket, this hood hid his head, leaving his face obscured within a void of darkness. As the individual sat he appeared to be playing a game on a retro handheld console repeatedly flicking the analogue sticks and pressing the console's buttons sending sounds of the game echoing throughout the empty construction zone.

"I see you've made yourself at home Reaper." A cold, stoic yet familiar voice called out to the individual who seemed to go by the name "Reaper."

"Yeah well gotta do that when my partner is taking fucking forever to get 'ere…" The Reaper continued playing his retro game as he spoke with a casual tone of a fairly young man as well as frequently using swearing, slang and shortening his words playfully.

"I apologise about that, just needed to conduct some preparations." The origin of the voice stepped forward to reveal the Operator. He wore a similar uniform as his first appearance, however this outfit now seemed to be entirely filled with various shades of a dark green.

This actually caught the Reapers attention as he looked up from his game, "Oh shit! is that the prototype?" The Reaper was met with a short nod from the operator before he returned to his game, "'bout time, why the hell did they send ya on the first mission before they finished it?"

The Operator joined the Reaper's side, looking out across the city skyline, "You shouldn't reveal the ace up your sleeve at the start of the game, we lost nothing from the mission's failure and planted the seed of fear within the enemy's heart."

"Yeah yeah whatever…" The Reaper responded dismissively before raising his head slightly so his void for a face was then facing the operator, "By the way… What's with the green?"

The operator had a mild chuckle before replying, "Lets just say that I wanted a look more befitting of a man that's been forced to change…"

The scene was met with an awkward silence as the Reaper tried to process what the Operator was trying to say, "Is that a reference to something that I'm not getting?"

The Operator seemed to grow frustrated by this response, "God damn it did you not pay any attention at all to the briefing of the events at Honnōji Academy? The researcher worked hard to get the necessary individuals for that information you know?"

The Reaper did a casual, dismissive hand waving motion, "Aw relax dude you know I'm not the kinda guy for taking in briefings, lectures and all that crap, just point me in the enemy's direction and Ill make 'em squirm!"

The operator gave a quick, "Hm." Before suddenly receiving feedback through his radio causing him to pull said radio out of his jacket and hold it up to his face.

"Sir, its Alpha one, the targets are leaving the café what are your orders?" It was a servant speaking through expectantly to the Operator as his commanding officer.

"Looks like the party is about to start." The operator turned his head to the Reaper before pressing the button on the side of the radio to respond, "Roger that Alpha one, you and Beta squad are to leave

your specialist with the barrier generators and get into position while Charlie squad is to move in to quietly take out the tailing nudist agents."

The servant on the other end of the line gave a quick "Roger that." Before the operator put back the radio within his jacket.

"Alright." The Operator turned around and began to walk through the building before stopping and turning back to the Reaper, "We should be hearing about the beginning of the Executioner's assault on the American nudist beach facility from HQ any moment now, you ready?"

The Reaper jumped up onto his feet, "Of course!" Despite not being visible, his giddy smile was audible in his voice as he walked past the Operator, "Let's fuck 'em up!"

Surrounded by crimson

The group made their out of the maid café having enjoyed various treats to the point many of the group struggled to keep their food down, Mako not included of course. Upon leaving the café their sight was met with Rei checking her watch. She turned to face the group as soon as she noticed them.

Satsuki's eyes were immediately drawn to a large metal case set standing up on the ground next to Rei, "That's…"

Satsuki's voice trailed off causing Rei to break into an explanation, "Your weapons? Yes, I decided to retrieve them from the limo. I apologise, I realise that you left behind so you all wouldn't feel on edge, however I felt uncomfortable not having them given the current state of affairs."

Satsuki smiled softly, "Its alright I understand, it must of been a hassle though to trek all the way back to the limo."

Rei gave her own smile in return, "You don't have to worry about that lady Satsuki, just worry about you and your friends enjoying yourselves."

Clone Nui stared at Rei in awe, in all of the memories she saw from the original Nui she never once saw Rei smile as genuinely as this. True Nui however turned her face away, her teeth clenched and her mind full of a mix of frustration and disgust.

Nonon stepped forward looking towards Rei, "Does that have our gear as well?"

Rei responded quickly, returning to her cool and professional self, "If you are referring to yours and the rest of the elite four's then yes, would you prefer to keep them on you?"

Nonon replied with a sigh as she rubbed her chin thoughtfully, "yeah would be smart given we could get separated at any point…"

Uzu walked up to Nonon's side to pat her head with a smugly amused smile, "Well well look at you using that head of yours for once."

Nonon smacked away his hand as she shouted back, "Like you're one to talk monkey brains!"

The back and forth continued as Inumuta spectated next to Gamagōri with an amused expression, "Hm looks like the children are fighting once again."

Gamagōri rubbed his forehead in frustration, "Ugh trying to stop them is a waste of time lets just retrieve our weapons before they draw attention to us."

Inumuta and Gamagōri moved in on Rei who opened up the case allowing them to take their weapons with Uzu and Nonon eventually joining them.

Meanwhile Satsuki turned to Ryūko, "We should take our gear as well, just to be careful."

"Yeah I guess so…" Ryūko looked solemn for a moment as she looked towards the case.

This provoked a reaction from Satsuki as she began to grow concern for her sister, "Are you feeling ok Ryūko? I know you wanted this trip to feel well… normal."

Ryūko's eyes widened with a realisation for a second before she looked back at Satsuki with a renewed expression, "Nah I'm alright, It sucks a bit I guess but there's only so far you can go before you gotta get your ass ready for a fight right?"

The concern however refused to fade from Satsuki's face, "I see…"

With a warm smile Ryūko placed her arms around her sister, wrapping Satsuki in a warm embrace, "Trust me sis', its alright even if we gotta fight, as long as I have you guys with me, I'll be ok and so will you."

Satsuki wordlessly returned Ryūko's hug, her face quickly turning from worry to hopeful joy. The two then moved over to grab their weapons from the case.

Clone Nui had watched the exchange cautiously, trying not to draw attention to herself. However she didn't notice Mako off to the side observing Nui curiously.

Mako finally spoke up as Ryūko and Satsuki began moving towards the case, "Hey Nui!"

Nui jumped in her skin of course, "O-oh! hello Mako…"

Mako was giddy with curiosity as she continued, "Does the other Nui need to retrieve her weapons?"

Nui replied with a calm smile and a shake of her head, "Nope, you see technically her weapons are built into her body, also for the other stuff she needs she keeps them in her pocket dimension."

Mako's eyes shone with intrigue, "Ooooooooooooo that's amazing! Do you think you could store other stuff in there? Like food!?"

Clone Nui looked upwards placing her hand on her chin as she thought out loud, "Hm I didn't think of that… But now that you mention it that might explain why things keep disappearing from my room…"

"Whoops! Caught me red handed." True Nui appeared playfully sticking her tongue out.

"Nui…" Clone Nui grumbled then pressed on with the topic curiously, "Never mind that for now, how does this storing of objects work?

What kind of stuff can you store?"

True Nui thought for a moment before responding, "Hmmm I would say smaller inanimate objects, anything bigger than a person would take too much energy to store and get chewed up trying to, and anything biological would take up too much energy as well due to being too complex."

Clone Nui nodded with understanding, "I see… we should try to remember you can do that, since that sounds like it could be pretty useful some time down the line…" As clone Nui finished speaking she turned her head away with true Nui fading out from sight.

When clone Nui turned her head she was met with the close gaze of Mako who observed Nui with intense curiosity.

Nui was of course startled once again, "Oh Mako! I'm sorry I was just talking to the other Nui."

Mako was surprised by Nui's reaction, "Oh its ok! I was just imagining what you two were talking about." Mako pointed her finger up joyfully, "You know it kinda reminds of when Ryūko and…" Mako's sentence trailed off, her face becoming filled melancholy.

Clone Nui looked at Mako with concern, "Are you ok Mako?"

True Nui appeared behind clone Nui, sighing with bemused frustration, "You truly are clueless aren't you…"

Clone Nui shot back a confused "Huh?!" back at true Nui.

However Mako interrupted consolingly, "I'm ok Nui, I'm sorry to have worried you…" Mako then gestured over towards the case, "I think the others are finishing up, lets join them."

"Oh alright…" Nui mumbled, surprised by Mako's sudden uncharacteristic solemnness.

The group gathered around Rei who spoke openly to them all, "So are you all ready? because if so we should get moving, we don't want to waste the rest of the day."

Ryūko turned to Satsuki avidly, "Well where do you wanna head next?"

Satsuki thought for a second before responding, "How about we go to that convention?"

Nonon replied next, scoffing in bemusement, "Hm, then I guess getting our weapons was a good idea, you seen some of those guys at those conventions?" However Nonon didn't get the reaction she expected as the rest of the group merely stared at her awkwardly, "What?! It was a joke!"

While the group continued to converse, a male Nudist beach agent stood behind the corner of a building in a large alley way close to the group. He was dressed in civilian white shirt and jeans, attempting to look inconspicuous as he watched over the proceedings.

A woman's voice chimed in through his ear piece, "Come in agent Ren, this is overseer, how we looking? Over"

The agent spoke quietly into a radio mic situated at his shirt's neckline, "Agent Ren reporting in, seems like they're finishing up getting their gear and are gonna start moving again. Over"

The voice returned replying coolly and professionally, "Copy that, I guess it wasn't the worst idea for them to retrieve their stuff in public, makes it easier to watch over them and if they're being followed moving to a private corner would probably make it easier to corner them…" The voice picked up again, however they seemed to be addressing someone else on the same channel, "Come in Agent Akira, this is overseer what's your status? Over."

The tension climbed as all that could be heard was static, Agent Ren's face turning to urgent concern.

The voice returned again speaking more frantically than before, "I said come in Agent Akira, what is your status? Over." Again no response, "Shit! Come in Agent Kou, give me a sitrep immediately. Over." However once more all that replied was radio static. "Damn it! Agent Ren get back here! Now-" Suddenly intense feed back screamed over the radio drowning out the voice of Overseer.

"Overseer? Come in Overseer!" Agent Ren spoke desperately into his mic receiving no reply.

The Agent began to panic as he got ready to move. However suddenly an arm stretched out from behind the agent and plunged a combat knife into the agent's throat. The agent struggled as another arm wrapped around their head and pulling them back from the corner revealing the arms had belonged to a Servant of the threads.

The Agent thrashed within the Servant's grasp, letting out gurgling, choking sounds before his body eventually went limp. The Servant dragged the body down the alley before throwing it Into a large dumpster.

The Servant then spoke into his own radio, "This is Charlie three reporting in, I've taken out the last tailing agent, We're clear to move in on the rest, over."

"Roger that Charlie Three, report back in with the rest of the squad. Over." A commanding cold voice responded accordingly.

"Understood, Charlie three out." The Servant proceeded to remove his gasmask as he made his way out of the alley way and blend in with the public.

Meanwhile, in a hotel suite high rise overlooking the city, there were four agents dressed in nudist beach uniforms manically typing into laptops and desperately attempting to operate radios and phones.

A fifth female agent with a long black pony tail stood at the window, a tense expression on her face, "Anything yet?" The agent's voice

matching the tension in her face as she continued to look out the window. This group of agents making up the unit Agent Akira referred to as "Overseer."

A male agent sitting down responded, the worry audible in his voice, "Negative sir, we can't get in contact with any reinforcements nor the elite four or anyone else from their group. No matter what frequency we switch to or any other form of communications we try."

The female agent grit her teeth in frustration, "Damn it… They're way too many steps ahead of us…" She then turned around from the window to call out to everyone in the room, "Alright! Get ready to move! We're-"

However, her words suddenly cut off as she realised, crimson threads were appearing at the back of the hotel room and were quickly opening up to reveal gaps in the walls leading to an unknown room. Before anyone could react suppressed shots rang out from the gaps, shooting down each of the sitting agents.

The female agent went to pull her needle pistol from her holster attached to the hip of her uniform. However as her hand touched the pistol's grip, another suppressed shot rang out from behind her and she fell to the ground.

Stepping forth from where the last shot originated was a Servant of the threads. Upon moving forward into the room, they surveyed the interior as their comrades entered through their own portals to move the bodies of the Nudist beach agents and taking control of the Nudist beach surveillance equipment.

The Servant surveying the room took a radio transceiver out from their jacket and held it up to their face, "Come in command this is Charlie One, we've taken out "Sentinel eye" I repeat, "Sentinel eye" is down, over."

The voice of the Operator replied back through the radio, "Copy that Charlie One, secure the area and await further orders, over."

The servant replied cold and professionally, "Roger that, Charlie squad over and out."

Back with the group, who were unknowingly under the watchful eyes of the servants, were now moving up the street. Ryūko, Satsuki, clone Nui and Rei were out in front, while Mako and the Elite four trailed behind closely. Mako walked with Gamagōri giving him a slight blush.

The Operator and the Reaper were now in a room watching the group through screens which was being fed the surveillance footage from the nudist beach agent's equipment. They were surrounded by a Servants of the thread group of soldiers who appeared the be prepping their equipment and weapons.

The group was walking past an incredibly large main road with many cars driving by at high speeds. They then approached an intersection with one of the exists across the road led to a large open plaza. Satsuki realised that they would need to cross the road as was following directions on her phone, after Inumuta had checked to make sure they had the right address.

The Operator seeing this through the screen saw his opportunity as he pulled up his radio, "Alright prep the barrier and wait for my signal."

The traffic lights turned red signifying the groups chance with the first to cross the road being Ryūko, Satsuki, Nui and Rei, believing that the others; the elite four and Mako were following close behind. However a large group of civilians cut between the two groups. By the time the first group noticed they had already crossed the road, with the elite four and Mako remaining on the other side as the traffic began to move with Mako using Gamagōri like a battering ram to push their way to the front of the civilian crowd.

A moment of waiting went by as the cars rushed past before the traffic light went red signifying their opportunity to cross.

Mako strode out at the front with the elite four tailing close behind and the rest of the crowd following suit.

The crowd of civilians made it a quarter the way across of the road, when the Operator called out through his radio, "Alright do it now."

The seconds ticked by as a subtle red aura began to appear in the sky, going largely unnoticed by the group and the civilians. However this was noticed by True Nui in her ghostly form who realised what was about to happen.

Suddenly true Nui sprung into action, taking her physical form by replacing clone Nui surprising Ryūko, Satsuki and Rei. But before they had a chance to react to Nui, she rushed forward into the road.

She deployed a multitude of clones who began to stand atop one another holding each of their legs in their hands. The real Nui then grabbed the legs of the bottom doppelganger and swung the tower of clones like a flail.

The clones flew into the crowd, including the elite 4 and Mako, sending them flying back to the side of the road they were crossing from.

The real Nui then did a backwards leap twirling in the air before landing with her usual playful gracefulness back on her side of the road.

Ryūko would be the one to shout at Nui in her confusion, "What the hell are you doing Nui?!"

However Nui didn't respond as she simply stood by in smug anticipation, "Aaaaaaaaaand… Now"

Almost on queue, the subtle red aura intensified becoming visible in the air before solidifying into a massive block shaped Red barrier along the road. the barrier enclosing a large section of the city, which

just so happens to be the part Satsuki, Ryūko, Rei and Nui had just crossed into.

The barrier appeared to dig into the ground with a massive crash, sending up dust and debris around the bottom of where it appeared causing a moment of recovery to take place for everyone to realise what had just happened.

While the civilians and and of course Mako stared at the barrier in confusion, The Elite four along with Rei and Satsuki from their side, stared up at the barrier with shocked familiarity. Ryūko looking at it in shock as well but also stowing herself for the fight ahead.

"This is…" Satsuki spoke hesitantly, her voice trailing off.

Rei picked up where Satsuki left off, speaking with absolute certainty, "It's a high velocity life fiber jammer… It seems the servants have decided to make their entrance."

On the other side of the crimson barrier, curious civilians fearfully approached it.

Gamagōri suddenly raised his voice to command the confused crowd as he held up a badge bearing the nudist beach insignia, "STOP! This is Nudist beach agent Gamagōri! No body touch the barrier! If you do it will cut your body to ribbons."

Just like that, any civilian in earshot of Gamagōri's command quickly and nervously backed away from the jammer.

"Yo." Uzu quickly turned to Inumuta who was now sat cross legged tapping keys furiously into his laptop, "Have you managed to get through to HQ?"

Inumuta continued to stare into his laptop screen with determination, however his voice was filled with disappointment, "I'm afraid not, none of the non-encrypted or even encrypted channels are getting through, I can't even send an email."

Nonon peered at Inumuta with her usual sassy condescension, "Can't you just call them?"

Inumuta scoffed with irritation, "Come on you really think I didn't try that? They must be tracking each line of communication we attempt and then jamming them accordingly."

Meanwhile Mako cupped her hands around her mouth attempting to shout through the barrier, "Hey Ryūkooooo?!"

However her efforts were in vain as none of her shouts were audible on the other side.

True Nui casually wiped her forehead with her usual joyful bravado, "Phew, any second sooner and they would be paste on the ground, see aren't I nice?"

Ryūko prodded in her continued lack of patience with Nui's sudden and unexpected antics, "Would of been nicer if you pulled the elite four over here, now we're stuck on this side with no back up."

Nui simply shrugged her shoulders, "eh would of taken too long, or do you prefer those beloved friends of yours as a fine red mist?"

Ryūko gritted her teeth in frustration unable to think of a way to respond.

Nui's and Ryūko's argument was then interrupted, as Satsuki and Rei began to once again theorise on the existence of the barrier, "How on earth do they have the life fibers to carry this out? Let alone the technology for it…" Satsuki scowled as she struggled to consider the different possibilities.

Rei bared a similar look on her face, however her voice was filled with cold determination, "Whoever the servants of the thread are, their plans have coincided with the return of the life fibers, and with it seeming that they have an abundance of them I don't think that's any coincidence. They must have an Ace up their sleeve and a brilliant

mind directing it. From here on out we must assume that no usage of the life fibers is beyond their reach."

Ryūko weighed in on to Rei's and Satsuki's discussion, "Well what the hell do we do? Wait around here and see how long they keep this up?"

Rei turned to Ryūko, replying in her cold analytical manner, "I doubt they will allow us to do that."

Satsuki added on, nodding in agreement with Rei, "Indeed, this barrier is being used as a corner for them to back us into. They are most likely organising a trap deep within this cage however if we don't walk into it they will come to us, and fighting against a wall that will rip us to shreds if we touch it is not a very strategic position."

Ryūko turned towards the path leading into the inner city square, "So the only option is… to head inside…"

Nui smiled brightly breaking through the tension with her usual playful demeanour, "Oooooo a private team up fight with Ryūko, Satsuki and lil' Hōōmaru? I don't know whether to kiss these servants of the threads or rip their faces off!"

Rei stepped forward pulling a pair of combat knives out of her jacket, "The latter option would be the more efficient strategy."

Nui responded by joyfully unveiling one of her life fiber claws, "Oki doki!"

Ryūko stepped forward as well looking onward stalwartly, "Those assholes have probably taken the civilians from the city square captive, probably just to get 'em outta the way though, doubt they would think they could use them as hostages given before they've targeted people we know and not strangers in the past."

Satsuki joined her also stepping onward, "Nevertheless they need to be freed and these servants; the disgusting pigs in human clothing

need to be put in their place."

The group began to walk into the city square away from the view of the elite four on the other side of the barrier. However Satsuki lagged behind to gain the attention of Mako and the elite four. Once their attention was on Satsuki, she took out her two blades from the back of her shirt then raised Bakuzan Kōryū into the air before turning away to join the others in her group.

Mako watched Satsuki's actions with confused curiosity, "What was that?"

Gamagōri would be the first to answer, "Its a message."

Uzu adding on to this with, "Means prepare for the fight to come."

Gamagōri immediately began to command the group, "Nonon, Uzu move to each side of this crowd and try to keep an eye out for any suspicious activity, I'll continue to keep the civilians calm and in check, Inumuta continue to try getting in contact with the rest of nudist beach."

Each of the other members of the elite four nodded silently before moving to each of their objectives.

Mako looked up at Gamagōri teary eyed, the worry beginning to set in, "Are the others gonna be okay?"

Gamagōri knelt down so his face was closer to Mako's height before speaking softly to comfort her, "You know how strong they are, they will be ok, trust me."

Mako wiped the tears from her eyes before nodding, causing Gamagōri to smile warmly before giving her a short head pat.

Gamagōri stood back up to shout out to the crowd of civilians, "Alright everybody remain calm! support from both the police and the rest of nudist beach are on their way!"

Gamagōri's command to the civilians was met with concerned murmuring, however the crowd remained largely calm and orderly.

Gamagōri stared back out at the other side of the barrier, "Please, remain safe lady Satsuki…"

Back in the inside of the jammer, the other group were approaching the large open space of the city square, Ryūko strode slightly at the front, while Satsuki and Rei lagged slightly behind to her left and Nui to her right.

They proceeded along a zebra crossing through the eerily quiet empty square surrounded by sky scrapers, many of which holding screens featuring various advertisements while others were flickering and featuring nothing but static, a likely result of the massive crash of the jammer's activation, another result being plenty of shattered windows having spread broken glass along the pavement.

Rei tried to close any gap of space between her and Satsuki, "Stay close to me lady Satsuki, we don't know when they will attack or how…"

The silence prevailed once again even with the sound of the group's footsteps. The group constantly looking around counting every second.

Still nothing…

A few seconds more passed.

Still nothing…

The group approached the centre of the square.

Still nothing…

Still nothing, still nothing, still nothing, still nothing…

But then…

"Its time… Lets go reaper."

Click

Suddenly the scene was filled with a cacophony of noise as explosives detonated around the bottom of multiple of the sky scrapers. The large buildings then began to fall filling the square with dust and debris.

The group ran back to avoid the skyscrapers falling to their left and right, Nui skipping casually hoping through the air.

The debris settled and the group found themselves surrounded by the rubble of the fallen buildings.

Ryūko having caught a piece of the building about to have fallen on them before throwing it away, "You good? Guys?"

Satsuki, Rei and even Nui were coughing from being caught in a cloud of dust.

Satsuki did her best to reply through choking breaths, "Y-yes we're alright…"

Once the group had recovered they stepped up onto a pile of rubble to gain a vantage point. A top the pile they surveyed the remains of the square, which was now akin to a battlefield, filled with nooks and crannies created by the pieces of the buildings laying about the large space.

Suddenly a vertical wave of purple energy raced across the ground like a shark fin. It head straight towards the centre of the group. With little time to react, Nui and Ryūko were forced to dodge to their right while Satsuki and Rei had to dodge to their left separating the two halves of the group.

When Satsuki and Rei had recovered from their rushed dodge, they were surrounded by a spread out group of servants of the threads

soldiers amongst the rubble, pointing their rifles at them.

When Nui and Ryūko had recovered, they faced the Reaper and the Operator standing side by side. The Reaper casually spun a scythe made up of a black pole and a dark purple blade which glowed with a lighter purple energy. While the operator bared two emerald green pistols that he wielded akimbo style.

The Operator spoke unable to hide the excitement in his voice, "Yup its definitely time… to get down to business."

Messy business

The battlefield fell quiet as each party stood off against each other. Satsuki and Rei remaining perfectly still in their combat stances, Satsuki held her shorter blade towards herself beneath her longer blade which faced away from her. Rei holding both of her combat knives upside down her blades facing towards her back as she held her arms by her sides and her form partially crouched as if she was ready to pounce.

The Servants facing them trained their rifles on the pair, many of them readying their fingers to pull their triggers.

Meanwhile across the battlefield Ryūko and Nui stood side by side across from the Operator and the Reaper. Nui baring her usual blissful smile as she revealed both of her life fiber claws.

Ryūko however glared at her foes ferociously. She proceeded to pull a black rectangular shaped stick from her jacket, she then pulled the stick apart into two halves before pressing a button on each of the halves. The halves opened up and extended out a stack of three red blades which split apart to form her nudist beach dual wield life fiber severing knives.

Nui looked at Ryūko's weapons with impressed glee, "Oooooo that's pretty neat."

Ryūko gave her a swift comment to move on quickly, "Nudist beach R n' D department took a note from the scissor blades to make them more discreet than carrying a case around everywhere, now can we focus on the matter at hand?"

The Operator spoke out to the two in a casual tone however his animosity was obvious, "Well its a been a while hasn't it?"

Ryūko held one of her blades out in the direction of the Operator and the Reaper, "Sure has, you've come to your ass kicked again?"

Nui meanwhile attempted peered closely at both the Operator and the Reaper, "Wait a sec' Ryūko, something's different about their outfits…"

Ryūko replied derisively, "What? The different colour scheme?"

Nui continued staring at their two opponents, "Ryūko I'm being serious, its something else."

The Operator smiled beneath his gas mask, letting out a confident "Hmph."

Before Ryūko had a chance to respond to Nui, a sudden flurry of gunshots echoed from the direction Satsuki and Rei dodged to after the purple wave of energy split the ground apart.

Ryūko shouted a concern "Shit!" As she turned her head in the direction of the gunfire.

Suddenly the Reaper dashed forward before swiping his scythe horizontally sending a large horizontal wave of purple energy towards Nui and Ryūko.

Ryūko and Nui attempted to block the wave of energy with Nui's claws and Ryūko's blades, possibly surprisingly buckling under the pressure of the attack. The wave of energy dissipated causing the Reaper to respond by moving to point blank before slashing his scythe at Nui.

Nui caught the blades mid air while Ryūko went to attack the Reaper. But before her blades could connect She began being shot at by the Operator.

Ryūko quickly cut the bullets out of the air, while Nui pushed against the Reaper, who leapt backwards.

Nui and Ryūko after a second of recovery were about to move in to counter attack when suddenly, Ryūko was seemingly dragged into the air by an unseen force as she yelled out in confusion before being flung in an unknown direction.

Nui looked in the direction Ryūko went in the air with her own confusion, "R-Ryūko?!"

The Operator spoke quickly to the Reaper before moving in the same direction as where Ryūko flew, "You handle Nui, Ryūko's mine."

A purple light in the shape of a smile shone from the darkness within the Reaper's hood, "Right'o! Lets have some fun…"

Back with with Satsuki and Rei before the shots had been fired, they had continued to stare down with the servant soldiers.

Satsuki attempted to quietly mumble to Rei while continuing to train her eyes on their foes, "How many do you count?"

Rei replied the tension prevailing through her as well, "Sixteen."

Satsuki nodded slightly, "Me as well, I'll try to block as much as I can, you deploy the shield the nudists provided to us."

Rei responded with her own affirmation, "Understood."

Their exchange was interrupted by a stone falling from where a servant was standing upon the pile of rubble that towered above Rei and Satsuki, sending it's ricochets echoing throughout the battlefield.

Satsuki spoke out to the servants to break the tension, "So… I suppose you don't wish to negotiate?"

And with that, the Servants began to fire their hail of bullets upon them. Satsuki was forced to move quickly, her blades disappearing into a flurry of movement as she span, cutting each bullet out of the air.

Only less than a second occurred of Satsuki blocking the bullets, while Rei placed a disk on the ground which bared the nudist beach insignia. She then tapped the centre causing the disk to seemingly dig beneath the ground. Suddenly a half sphere sprouted out around the two from beneath the concrete, the servant's bullets dinging off the sphere's metal surface.

One of the Servants pulled a pin from a grenade, counted a few seconds while their allies continued to fire, before throwing the grenade at the half sphere. The grenade bounced briefly before exploding in the air.

The half sphere was engulfed in smoke from the explosion while the servants continued to fire a few seconds longer before one of the servants began shouting "Cease your fire!" to the others.

Just like that the firing ceased with many of the servants using the opportunity to reload while the others attempted to observe the half sphere through the cloud of dust.

Eventually the dust settled, and those observing the half sphere noticed two holes seemingly carved out of the steel of the half sphere to the north and south areas.

The realisation hit the servants too late. As Satsuki showed herself among the north side of the group of servants. The soldiers attempted to react, however Satsuki dashed through them cutting off their clothes and destroying their weaponry before knocking each one out in the blink of an eye.

At the south, on the other side of this arena, the Servants attempted to train their aim on the constantly moving Satsuki. However their attempts to fire upon her was interrupted as Rei appeared on the south side, carrying her own assault on the witless servants, slashing their clothes as well as firearms apart and leaving them unconscious with a swift blow to the head with the hilt of her life fiber severing combat knives.

A single thought filled Rei's mind as she methodically took down one servant after the next, *"Death before I let you hurt her…"*

Going to the other side of the barrier, The elite four stood guard, Uzu and Nonon keeping watch over the buildings behind them as they spread out over each side of the crowd of civilians. Inumuta sat cross legged on the ground as he typed at furious rates into his laptop, his expression growing ever more frustrated. Gamagōri stood tall, his arms crossed and his sentinel presence keeping the surrounding civilians calm who murmured amongst each other with worried expressions. Mako stood close to Gamagōri, gripping tightly on his clothing as her fear and concern were made obvious on her face.

Suddenly the explosion from within the barrier rang out. Despite the barrier seemingly sound proof the sound of the explosion managed to pierce through said barrier. The sound sent increasing panic through the crowd of civilian's who's concerned voices grew louder and even the elite four's faces unveiled a tinge of worry.

Gamagōri called out to the crowd of civilians commandingly, "Stay calm everyone! Stay calm!"

The cacophony of the civilian's voices wouldn't die down however, causing Nonon to raise her voice in an attempt to call out to Gamagōri, "Ira it might not be safe here! We should get them to evacuate!"

Gamagōri turned his head towards Nonon to nod silently before turning back to once again call out to the civilians, "Alright everyone! Please evacuate in calm and orderly manner as far as you can from-H-hey!" Gamagōri's command was interrupted however as the civilians wasn't waiting around to hear the rest as they hurriedly rushed away from the area in the opposite direction of the barrier.

Uzu and Nonon gathered around Gamagōri with Inumuta as well looking up at Gamagōri from his laptop and Mako wrapping her arms around Gamagōri as tight as she could.

Gamagōri sighed with concern, "I hope they will be alright… We should try to find other civilians still remaining within the vicinity of the barrier."

Nonon replied with frustration audible in her voice, "What about Lady Satsuki and the others?"

Gamagōri responded reflecting Nonon's level of frustration, "There's not much we can do for them right now… we should try to keep the civilians safe and get in contact with-"

"Guys?" Gamagōri was suddenly interrupted by Uzu who was looking around their surroundings with a worried expression.

Gamagōri, Nonon and Inumuta joined Uzu in looking around them. They saw several men and women in business suits holding brief cases.

The realisation quickly hit the elite four as the people in the business suits put on their gas masks before pointing their rifles towards the elite four, who's faces turned to tension filled determination.

Back with Nui, she faced against the reaper who bared their scythe threateningly, holding the handle with a single hand while pointing the end towards Nui.

Nui pondered curiously at her foe, "Well I know who mister soldier boy is but who on earth are you?"

The Reaper pulled his scythe close to him as he appeared to giggle to himself as if he had waited for this moment, "Hehehe… Me you ask?" The Reaper suddenly posed extravagantly arms open wide, "I am the bringer of death! The witness of calamity! The head of the four horsemen! I am THE REAPER!"

Nui yawned derisively, unimpressed, "Hm, and the owner of an annoying imagination it seems…"

The Reaper pointed at her childishly as he shouted with angry irritation, "Hey screw you miss "grand couturier!"

Nui appeared disinterested as she flicked the claw on her thumb and index finger together sending sparks flying off into the air, looking at it casually, "I actually was the couturier for the world's leading company in the clothing industry, you're just a poop head with a trash taste in fashion and a dumb looking scythe."

"Alright that's it!" The Reaper shouted angrily as he suddenly dashed towards Nui holding his scythe down by his side with one hand, the blade pointing towards the ground.

Upon reaching Nui's range he went for a powerful horizontal slice, grabbing the handle of the scythe with his other hand as he swung. Nui deflected the attack with her own swipe from the opposite direction, matching the power the Reaper put into his attack. The attacks collided sending shockwaves around the two, strong enough to rupture the surface of the ground within their vicinity.

Both Nui's claw and the Reaper's scythe strained under the pressure from the other, however the Reaper held strong to match Nui's unwavering composure.

This show of strength left Nui seemingly intrigued, "Oooo, seems you have better taste in life fibers than in fashion, I wonder how your body can withstand all that…"

The Reaper sneered confidently, "You haven't seen anything yet!"

The two broke out into a series of trading furiously fast attacks, each one deflecting the other. Nui going for vertical swipes of her claws, the Reaper deflecting these with his own vertical attacks and vice versa for horizontal and diagonal attacks.

After a number of attacks were traded and deflected, Nui plunged her hand flat like a spear head towards the dark gap within the Reaper's hood. The Reaper span his scythe in a vortex-like fan in

front of him. Nui's arm was thrown to the side, sparks being thrown off from the clash.

Nui bared a rabid sinister smile as she lunged back towards the Reaper with her other claw. This time She managed to grab the pole of the scythe out of the air disrupting the spin with the Reaper attempting to pull the scythe from Nui's grip.

The Reaper threw out a round house kick towards Nui's chest, with the blow connecting forcing Nui to let go of the scythe and causing her to leap backwards flipping in the air before landing seemingly gracefully and dusting herself off casually.

The Reaper span his scythe playfully before holding the pole on his shoulders behind his head with his arms holding it down, "You know this is exactly as fun as I was hoping it would be!"

Nui however pondered at the Reaper, on the outset appearing casual, however internally she thought to herself with a battle hardened manner, *"hm what's this guy's deal? He has to know he can't hurt me with a single life fiber severing blade right? I mean you would think so with all the life fiber tools these boys have… There has to be something more to this…"*

Nui's train of thought was broken however as the ground beneath the Reaper as his feet pressed into the ground. He suddenly sprang forth, leaping from the ground towards Nui.

The two traded another flurry of attacks, the Reaper changing his hand's position on the scythe with every direction he swung, Nui blocking the blade with carefully placed strikes however appearing casually joyful as she did so, even twirling every few strikes.

The Reaper then grabbed the end of his scythe with his other hand. He then committed to a powerful overhead strike plunging the blade of the scythe into the ground in front of him. Nui dodged backwards by leaping into a graceful backflip.

The Reaper moved forward pulling the handle of the scythe and twisting the blade in the ground leaving it behind him. The blade of the scythe then began sparking with a bright purple energy, while the Reaper pulled on the scythe and dragged it across the ground, the energy from the scythe bursting across the ground sending up rubble an dust at the still mid air Nui.

Nui hit the rubble flying at her out of the air before making a landing. The Reaper suddenly appeared in front of her, Nui's vision having been obscured by the dust. The Reaper did another horizontal slice, this time the edge of the inner part of the blade catching Nui on the side. However Nui caught the blade with her claw before the scythe could pierce any deeper into her flesh.

Nui sent a kick towards his head, the blow sending the Reaper flying backwards a few paces away as he tumbled onto the ground, his hand holding firm on the handle of the scythe.

True Nui looked down at her wound before touching it slightly, seeing her blood on her hand, "Nui?" She spoke, turning her head to the side to see the spectral clone Nui floating in the air, "Get to healing."

Clone Nui nodded with a hurried "Roger that!" Before her image disappeared.

While this occurred The Reaper picked himself off from the ground brushing himself off. He then uttered a simple two ominous words looking towards true Nui, "It begins…"

True Nui took a single stepped forward, however as soon as she did, she froze with her pupil shrinking and her eye widening.

Clone Nui looked true Nui from behind with a concerned panic, "N-Nui? Are you…" Her voice trailed off as she floated forward to look at the front of True Nui.

Suddenly true Nui threw up a large amount of blood with an audible continuous "Bleh" sound.

Clone Nui recoiled with a disturbed "Eek!" Before she managed to compose herself, "Nui what's wrong!?"

True Nui wiped the excess blood from her mouth before she responded, "I knew something was off, although the method did take me off guard, do me a favour and take a look at the injuries inside my body instead of just the surface."

Clone Nui nervously questioned as she looked around worriedly, "H-how do I do that?!"

True Nui snapped back a bit irritated, "Just focus on the image of my body and think about what you wanna do, you should be able to connect your thoughts with my subconscious life fibers."

Clone Nui's face began to gleam with the hint of determination as she focused her vision on true Nui's torso, "Alright I'll try." Just like that clone Nui began to see True Nui's image as a featureless dark red void which began to contain snapped bright crimson red threads which grew in quantity, "I… I see it!"

True Nui nodded with comprehension, "mhm, based on that and the continued tingling feeling in my insides, I would say that scythe put life fibers inside me when it cut me which is chewing me up from the inside."

Clone Nui Gasped with shock before looking over at the Reaper we continued to stand casually as he watched true Nui, "He isn't approaching…"

True Nui Commented after spitting out another mouthful of blood, "He's probably waiting for those life fibers to weaken me, makes it easier for him to kill me, not really much I can do…"

The dread began to fill clone Nui's expression, Her eye transfixed on the Reaper, "And he's capable of that?!"

True Nui bared a weary smile trying to hide the defeat in her eye, "Unfortunately so, I'm sorry Nui, I can… already feel my body becoming… heavier…"

Clone Nui looked back at true Nui, the tears welling in her eye as the despair set in, "From just a single cut…" She then disappeared, trying to accept her fate.

The Reaper did one last twirl of his scythe before holding it by his side speaking to himself to ponder on his next move, "Well I think I've waited long enough, she should be barely able to move now, and the Operator would probably like a hand with Matoi, well if he's not busy cleaning up her body that is…" He began extending his body readying to break into a sprint, "I told ya Harime…" He suddenly began dashing towards Nui aiming his scythe at Nui's neck, "I'm the bringer of death!"

The blade reached close to Nui's throat when suddenly… Rei came in from the right, slicing quickly at the Reaper with both of her life fiber severing combat knives.

"Woah there." The Reaper dodged each of the slices, the first with a quick duck and the other with a back step, narrowly avoiding each of the blades.

Rei went for a round house kick on the Reaper's left side, the Reaper opted to block the blow, pressing on his arm to reinforce his shoulder. Rei in turn jumped up to do a mid air kick which connected with the Reaper's chest. The Reaper was blown back but still managing to stay on his feet, this however gave Rei time to land and recover to go in for another attack with her knives. The Reaper reacted to this by allowing himself to fall backwards and break into a back flip to avoid Rei's attack and move back his position.

The Reaper recomposed himself before spinning his scythe once again playfully before posing in amused consideration, "Well well well! isn't it Rei Hōōmaru! I would say I didn't expect you to show up so soon but then again I don't know why I expected anything out of

those dumbass grunts. Ah well you know what they say…" A smile appeared within the void of the Reaper's hood, "You want something done… you do it yourself!"

Nui looked at Rei with a genuinely shocked expression, "Hōōmaru?!"

Rei looked back at Nui who was almost collapsing onto the ground, "Satsuki sent me to assist you and Ryūko while she deals with the rest of the soldiers, where is Ryūko?"

Nui spoke with a now battle hardened attitude, "Not sure, she was pulled away, I think it was something done by the operator, you need to go find her."

Rei raised her voice somewhat surprisingly, "I can't just leave you here like this!"

Nui snapped back with irritation, "If you don't that poop head will come after both of us! You don't stand a chance against him!"

Rei's voice simmered down into a cool focused statement, "I can't leave you here in a state like this, I promised Satsuki that I would protect you, I trust in Ryūko's capabilities and…" Rei's cool exterior seemed to crack for a moment, "Your life… it has value to me."

Nui's irritation turned to shock and confusion, "What the hell do you mean by that?"

Rei flipped a knife staring back at the Reaper with calm determination, "We survive this and you can find out."

The Reaper stood across from them appearing casual, yet within his mind he thought to himself to weigh up his options, " *Damn, things are getting complicated now that there's two of them, dunno when Nuis gonna recover and that Rei bitch ain't no joke…* " The Reaper noticed a slight movement by Nui, " *Hm?* "

Nui suddenly summoned a dozen of doppelgangers which appeared in puffs of white smoke partially obscuring the Reaper's vision. The Reaper sighed with irritation, "Well I guess I should of expected that sooner or later…"

Nui quickly spoke to Rei, "Won't keep him distracted for long, tactical retreat, pick me up though I can barely move."

Rei nodded in rushed affirmation, "Understood." Before picking up Nui by her waist and carrying Nui over her shoulder with Nui's torso towards Rei's back and her butt in front.

Nui shouted out out to Rei as the two Ran in the opposite direction from the Reaper who fought Nui's clones, "Hey! Give a lady some modesty!"

Back to when Ryūko and Nui were separated. Ryūko was pulled into the air, with Ryūko feeling the pulling force latched on her leg.

She landed on a flat surface of the remains of a collapsed building, her collision with a ground sending up a plume of dust from the force of the impact.

Ryūko coughed a bit from the dust before looking around to observe her surroundings, "Where the hell…? What was that?"

Her contemplation was interrupted however as suddenly there was another impact from behind her.

It was the Operator standing at the centre of the impact point, holding his two pistols together as he held the mag belonging to one of these pistols seemingly checking his ammunition. He placed the magazine back into one of the pistols before throwing the pistol back into his other hand, he then slid the bottom of the already loaded pistol against the top of the newly loaded one to cock it.

He spoke to himself in quiet focused contemplation, "Hm not quite tight enough to sever… possibly due to inaccuracy, Ill need to correct

my aim to compensate."

Ryūko began sprinting towards the Operator, her blades in hands and a furious look on her face. The Operator responded by pointing his pistols towards Ryūko, firing three shots. Ryūko cut the bullets out of the air as she continued to sprint. The Operator retaliated by throwing his arms to the side.

Suddenly Ryūko was pulled away from her sprint in the direction the Operator gestured to. Ryūko crashed into a large pile of rubble with an incredible force, the rubble above her falling down on top of her.

With a single kick the rubble on top of Ryūko burst out in an explosion like blast allowing Ryūko to pick herself off the ground. As she was doing so, she noticed by her foot a bullet belonging to the Operator, but more importantly what appeared to be an emerald coloured thread dragging the bullet along before it and the bullet seemed to dissolve into the air.

This was enough for Ryūko to be hit with the realisation of how the Operator was attacking her. He was seemingly attaching life fiber threads to his bullets then puppet-ting the threads into acting as his weapons, wrapping them around her body parts to pull her in his desired direction.

Ryūko smiled with confidence upon receiving the realisation and hearing the Operator's footsteps from behind her, "That's a neat party trick you got going, but it's gonna take more than a few bullets and threads to take me down."

The Operator replied scoffing with condescension, "Hmph you're quite the observant one, however you lack in intelligence to wield it properly."

Ryūko's smile turned to a spiteful scowl as she held one of her blades up towards the Operator, "We'll see who's the one without intelligence asshole!"

The exchange broke off as Ryūko began running towards the Operator, who of course fired multiple shots, Ryūko deflecting the bullets. But as the Operator attached threads to the mid air fired bullets, Ryūko cut the threads with her blades. The Operator retaliated by firing two shots upwards into the sky, an action that would initially confuse Ryūko however she saw the Operator send threads in the same direction. He then manoeuvred the threads with his hands causing the bullets to curve from their direction in the sky to fall upon Ryūko. She blocked these as well, but before she could cut the threads attached to these bullets, they suddenly shifted and wrapped around Ryūko's arm and strangling the blade out of that hand. Ryūko was going to use the blade in her other hand to cut these threads. However the Operator shot more bullets with one pistol as he reloaded the other gun which he held in the same hand which held the threads tied around Ryūko's arm, dropping the mag onto the ground before green life fibers shot out from his clothing and formed a new mag which slotted into the gun on it's own.

Ryūko was forced to abandon her attempt to cut the threads on her arm to instead use her remaining blade to block the Operator's bullets. The Operator then let go of the threads holding Ryūko's arm and attached threads to the newly fired bullets. These new threads would encircle Ryūko before she could react, tying her arms to her side and forcing her to let go of the other blade. The Operator let go of these threads which seemed to cause them to latch into the ground instead, the Operator using this opportunity to fire another bullet at Ryūko's head. Surprisingly even to the Operator, Ryūko managed to catch this bullet with her teeth before spitting the bullet out.

The Operator however quickly recovered from his surprise as he smiled slightly beneath his gas mask. He attached a thread the bullet Ryūko spat out, which appeared to wrap around Ryūko's throat. He slotted his guns back into his holsters as he began holding this thread with both hands, attempting to put his full force into pulling this thread.

Ryūko reacted quickly as she managed to pull her arms apart bursting out from the threads that enclosed her before grabbing onto the thread and pulling beginning a tug of war between the two.

Ryūko spoke through clenched teeth and strained grunts, "What the hell are you tryin' to do?!"

However the Operator wouldn't need to respond for her to get her answer. She noticed blood was leaking from the spot where she was holding onto the thread. She hadn't considered how sharp the threads were, with their nature as life fibers giving them the possible property of being able to cut other life fibers, and given a noose like tie of these threads was around her neck, it became obvious that the Operator was going to use this to sever her life fibers from all sides.

Upon realising this, Ryūko put all her might into her pull, yelling out in a strained battle cry. Doing this she managed to gain enough leverage to let loose one of her hands, which she used to grab one of her blades from the ground beside her, using this to cut the thread.

Both her and the Operator fell backwards from the release of the thread. Ryūko grabbed her blades then quickly pushed off the ground with the Operator doing the same. Ryūko reformed her battle stance with one blade in front with the other held to her right on it's side hovering above as the wounds on her hands closed up and the bleeding ceasing. While the operator squinted as he held both his pistols towards Ryūko and the fight returned to a stand off.

The Operator used this moment, seemingly speaking with a curious tone, "Tell me Ryūko because I don't quite understand; Why are you defending Nui Harime? You were ready to turn yourself in just to save this "clone Nui," while I considered that a possibility of my ultimatum, I saw the possibility of you letting her die more likely. She may have become anew with a different personality… But she's still the one who killed your father, same face, same single eye, same name and same past."

Ryūko channelled her stoicism into her reply, however she couldn't hide the essence of her malice, "I don't have to explain myself to you."

The Operator seemed uncaring yet somewhat disappointed by this reply, "Well I suppose that's true, its a shame though, gonna be hard to get an answer from you once I've cut you into pieces."

Ryūko smiled spitefully, her eyes filled with fury, "Oh don't worry we're gonna have plenty of time to talk once I've stripped you nude and chucked you in a holding cell, now lets do this!"

Skin of their teeth

The Elite four stood at the centre of the road, surrounded on all sides by servant soldiers, while the fight between those within the barrier raged on.

Uzu tried to whisper carefully to Inumuta who was now standing along with the others, "Should we try to use a shield?"

Inumuta tried to look back at Uzu without moving his head, "They're too close, takes too long we would be shot if we tried, we'll have to use the other counter measure."

Uzu snapped back continuing to whisper, "Shit… thats-"

Uzu stopped mid sentence however as he noticed the tension increasing from the soldiers beginning to notice them attempting to communicate.

Gamagōri spoke out to the surrounding soldiers in a similar way to Satsuki, "Are you up for negotiation?"

One of the servant soldiers stepped forwards holding his rifle vertically with one hand, "Maybe, but you gonna have to drop your weapons and come back with us first."

Gamagōri replied, his gaze sharpening, "Sounds less like negotiation and more like interrogation."

The servant soldier responded with a smug tone, "Well we do have more cards on the table."

Gamagōri spoke back with a strangely stoic and matter of fact manner, "And not enough cards underneath the table it seems."

The servant threw out a confused "Hm?"

Inumuta however used this as his signal. He subtly tapped the side of his index finger with his thumb. Suddenly each of elite four's clothes burst apart into a large cloud of smoke which almost instantly covered the surrounding area.

The servants, taken by surprise and not knowing how to react began firing. However each of the servants would drop one by one as the elite four now in their nudist beach "uniforms" moved within the smoke taking down each of the soldiers, stripping them and knocking them out. The servants tried to react but failed to see their enemies movements through the smoke.

One of the servants attempted to aim carefully with their rifle through the smoke as the sounds of their comrades being defeated surrounded them. Suddenly a large shadowed appeared through the smoke, before the servant could react, the shadow burst forth from the smoke revealing Gamagōri in his nudist beach gear who wielded a pair of black square shaped knuckle dusters with three blades attached to the knuckle area on both hands. Gamagōri threw out a swipe punch, cutting the servant's clothing whilst also applying pleasure from his fists knocking the wind out of their chest allowing Gamagōri to give them a swift chop to the back of their head and knocking them out.

The smoke began to dissipate, revealing all the elite four standing above the unconscious nude bodies of the servant soldiers, each of them wearing their nudist beach gear along with Mako of course who shook with terror before falling on her knees. Uzu wielded a pair of life fiber blades akin to Ryūko's with a light green theming instead of red, Nonon wielded a pair of black combat knives similar to Rei's and Inumuta held a pair of black tape measurers that he would wield like whips, a design inspired by a weapon used by the original Nui Harime.

Gamagōri stepped forward to speak to the others, "Status report."

Nonon answered with an irritated tone, "Tch from my count looks like two of them ran away."

Uzu smiled with smug bemusement, "Damn we must be losing our edge."

Gamagōri cut through with his stoicism, "Never mind that, lets tie them up then try to secure the area for reinforcement's arrival."

As if on cue, Tsumugu suddenly arrived. He was wearing his combat gear and a pair of sun glasses and was driving in on his motor cycle. Following him was several black military vehicles baring the nudist beach insignia.

Tsumugu pulled up, the roar of his chopper's engine fading out. Tsumugu turned his torso while continuing to sit on the bike and pushed up his sunglasses to speak to the elite four, "Yo I see I'm late to the party."

The other trucks quickly stopped behind him. The doors to the trucks opened up leading a large amount of nudist beach agents to step out and move rapidly, setting up around the jammer, filling the the background with the sounds of their footsteps.

Tsumugu stepped off his bike to stand along side the group, "What's the situation? I'm assuming the Big ass red block is the doing of our friends the servants."

Nonon replied her irritation becoming frustration, "Yup, and Satsuki, Ryūko, Rei and Nui are all inside…"

Tsumugu sighed with a narrow eyed grimace, "Shit… have you guys tried the sewers?

Uzu responded with somewhat of an answer trying to reflect the urgency of the situation, "Not yet but, given the barrier appears to be dug into the ground so I think its safe to say that they got that covered."

Tsumugu nodded placing his fingers against his chin, "Yeah makes sense, Ill get some agents to check anyway."

Mako popped up immediately after he said this, "Naked in the sewers?!"

Tsumugu ignored this however to continue plotting their next move, "But then what's the plan? sit on our asses and hope they aren't getting killed in there?"

Inumuta spoke up from bellow, as had sat back down on the ground facing the barrier tapping keys at even faster speeds than before, "Won't be our preferred option but its possible, from the data I'm receiving the energy is dissipating from the jammer at a decently rapid rate. We can Surround the barrier with nudist beach agents and trap them in."

Tsumugu replied with an annoyed defeated tone, "That would be a nice idea if those bastards weren't capable of teleporting."

An air of shock filled the air from the members of the elite four, Mako as well shouting out a "Whaaaaaat?!"

Tsumugu elaborated in an effort to clarify, "They invaded the new base over in America before supposedly teleporting out, then they levelled the place with a bomb."

Inumuta turned his head back from looking up at Tsumugu to looking back at his laptop screen, his brows furrowed with frustrated concentration, "Well that… complicates things, and means their strategy makes a lot more sense…"

Uzu spoke up, he too showing frustration now, "So what the hell do we do?!"

Gamagōri responded, his face twisted in anguish, "There's nothing we can do for now… We'll have to move in as soon as the jammer loses power."

During this conversation, a servant agent stood watching from a window in a building overlooking where the elite four stood in front of

the jammer.

The Servant spoke into a radio, speaking systematically, "Nudist beach reinforcements have arrived, all agents on this side of the barrier exfiltrate ASAP."

Back on the other side of the barrier, true Nui and Rei hid behind a wall formed by collapsed piece of rubble. Rei attempted to peer around the wall, seeing the Reaper fighting with the several doppelgangers, cutting them apart with seemingly effortless strikes.

Nui convulsed the ground, groaning with a hand on her stomach, "Ugh… it's been a while since I felt like this…"

Rei spoke with a matter of fact tone, "You alright Nui?"

Nui sighed, meeting Rei's cold exterior with attempts of uncaringness, "Oh just got life fibers eating away at me from the inside. Shouldn't be too long before before they are assimilated by the others."

Rei checked her clothing quickly before looking back round the edge of the wall, "How long exactly till they are assimilated?"

True Nui's face twisted with struggle as she tried to answer, "Uh…"

Suddenly a blood version of clone Nui appeared, the blood seeping out from True Nui's wound, "There its done! I repaired all the broken threads, maaaan that was a hassle it was like trying to wrangle angry snakes! Well however that feels… But it was troublesome!" The blood then returned into the wound causing the blood Nui to disappear

True Nui stuck a hand inside her wound, pulling out a few life fibers, "Oh yeah it is repairing! Not bad, not bad at all." She let go of the threads causing them to seep back into her wound, "Ok that should be about… two to three minutes."

Rei nodded comprehensively before replying, "Alright… once you have regenerated could you pull out the Reaper's banshi?"

Nui scoffed with irritation, "What you really think I wouldn't of thought of that already? I can't find his banshi…"

Rei seemed taken aback with shocked confusion, "What?"

Nui reiterated, her patience thinning, "You got wax in your ears? I said I can't find his banshi, it seems like the suit is designed to hide it from someone with my abilities… Damn it I kinda want to meet the brains behind these poop heads…"

Rei pondered on this for a short moment, before making a decision, "Alright, how many more Doppelgangers can you create?"

Nui appeared frustrated as she answered, "Ugh in this weakened state only two…"

Rei however responded confidently, "That will be enough, give their puppets to me."

Nui's eye widened as she realised the possible implications behind Rei's command, "Wait what are you trying to do?!"

Rei however answered cool and controlled, "Buy some more time."

The rage brimmed on Nui's face, "You humans never cease to piss me off, why won't you listen to me and go find Ryūko?!"

Rei replied in kind, "I told you why! I'm not gonna leave you here, and besides I don't care if you want a nice little excuse to die the other you wants to live."

Nui grit her teeth trying to contain her anger, "Damn it… Fine! But I swear if you die I'm gonna find you in the afterlife and Annoy you for the rest of time!" Nui then stretched a hand out to give Rei the doppelganger spawning puppets.

Rei took the puppets from Nui, speaking back with the more cold restrained exterior she would usually exude, "I'm not sure where this concern has come from as it is much unlike you miss grand couturier to care about my well being, but it is duly noted nonetheless."

Nui replied by scoffing dismissively, "Hmph don't mistake my concern for kindness little Hōōmaru, I would merely be incredibly bored if you were to die by anyone else's hands but mine."

The Reaper finished decapitating one last Nui doppelganger, causing it to fall and disappear into a puff of smoke, "So annoying… Was that the last one?"

Rei came in attacking at the Reapers back. The Reaper blocked the strikes by curling the blade of his scythe around behind him.

"Hm one more then." The Reaper pushed off with a spinning slice, jumping backwards from the pressure, "I know you're just buying time for Nui to finish regenerating, but screw it I'll bite, I'll kill you and still have time to spare."

A puff of smoke appeared behind the Reaper, signifying a Nui doppelganger's approached placed there by Rei during hers and the Reaper's exchange.

The Reaper said a causally surprised "Woah." As he dodged backwards with back steps to avoid the Doppelganger's advancing swipes of it's claws, the doppelganger laughing as it attacked.

Rei used this as her opportunity to conduct her own assault, rushing in two blades in hand.

The Reaper looked back for less than a second while blocking another one of the doppelganger's attacks to see Rei rushing towards him. He retaliated by upper-cutting the Nui doppelganger with the bottom of his scythe before grabbing it by one of it's enormous pigtails before flinging it at Rei.

Rei countered, catching the doppelganger by her hands then spun around and launching it back at the Reaper, the doppelganger laughing with blissful playfulness as it flew through the air. The Reaper grabbed his scythe with both hands and held it out in front of him. The doppelganger flew directly into the blade of the scythe, the momentum carrying it to the point that the Nui doppelganger was cut in half and the two halves continued flying off behind the Reaper before disappearing in puffs of white smoke.

The Reaper spoke with a smug satisfied voice, "Well, what next?"

Rei answered him wordlessly as she threw the other Nui puppet to the side before sprinting towards the Reaper. The Nui puppet spawning another doppelganger with a puff of white smoke, the doppelganger then joined Rei's side as they both dashed towards the Reaper. The Reaper readied himself expectantly, throwing his scythe from one hand to the other with a confident swagger. However as Rei and the doppelganger began to get close to the Reaper, Rei suddenly used one of her combat knives to cut the doppelganger's throat, surprising the Reaper. The Doppelganger quickly disappeared into a cloud of white smoke, and Rei used this cloud to obscure the Reaper's vision of her. She dashed to the side quicker than the Reaper could react and went for a horizontal slice across his chest.

The Reaper attempted to dodge back once he realised what was happening, however Rei's knives managed to marginally hit their mark leaving a decently sized cut on the chest portion of the Reaper's suit. Rei realised the cut wasn't going to go all the way through and so she opted to back flip backwards to gain distance between her and the Reaper, her feet scrapping across the ground as she made a landing.

The Reaper Shone a foreboding smile from the abyss within his hood, "Hah! Not bad…" He began to point at Rei with his Scythe maliciously, "… But I'm afraid the game is over."

The realisation hit Rei as a deep pain shot through her arm. She quickly looked down to see a small cut on her arm, no doubt caused by the Reaper during their last exchange going unnoticed by Rei in her adrenaline fuelled state. Worse of all Rei saw a few purple threads partially inside the wound and were attempting to squeeze themselves fully inside Rei's flesh through the small cut.

Returning to Ryūko, a few moments had passed from the stand off as she was now running against a concrete wall within a collapsed building as multiple shots trailed behind her, no doubt originating from the Operator's pistols. Ryūko continued running as threads attached themselves to the bullets after they ricocheted off the wall before the threads began chasing after Ryūko like tendrils. Ryūko cut each of the threads as they approached her.

Ryūko continued running through the remnants of the building as it began to become an incline. As Ryūko reached the edge of the building, to what was akin to a window, she leapt out leaving a large impact as she landed on the ground. She surveyed the area hurriedly trying to see where the next attack will come from. She got her answer as several green threads had appeared to pull pieces of rubble from the ground carrying them like tentacles. The threads fired the pieces of rubble at Ryūko like missiles. She cut through each one, the remnants of the rubble flying past her as she dodged during her attacks on the projectiles.

As Ryūko cut through the last one, the Rubble split apart and revealed the Operator trailing behind it, seemingly having latched onto the piece of rubble as it flew. Ryūko had little time to react as the Operator shot twice. She managed to cut one of the bullets out of the air, however the other bullet hit her shoulder, lodging itself inside. Ryūko's eyes widened as she clenched her teeth from the sudden pain.

The Operator quickly landed before attaching a thread to the bullet inside Ryūko's shoulder which wrapped around the bullet wound circling around her back. Ryūko struggled against the threads pull, causing the Operator eye's to sharpened as he put his full strength

into pulling the threads, pulling Ryūko into the air before slamming her into a diagonal slanted large piece of a building.

The repeated blows was beginning to take it's toll on Ryūko as she failed to keep a hold on her blades and was sluggishly raising her head after the impact. The Operator of course took this as his opportunity, firing a bullet into each of Ryūko's legs, sending droplets of blood flying up from the points of impact.

Ryūko yelled out in pain, while the Operator attached more threads to the bullets in Ryūko's legs, the threads wrapping around her legs in a loop.

"No more running." The Operator spoke coldly, his gaze filled with malevolence, "You're all mine."

The Operator threw his hand to the side gracefully, like a conductor commanding his orchestra, and just like that, the green threads pulled away, taking Ryūko's legs with them.

Ryūko's eyes widened from the shock trying to process what was happening as seemingly gallons of blood flooded down from the severed points on her legs. Ryūko's legs wiggled in the grasp of the Operator's life fibers mid air, before the threads closed around the legs, causing them to break apart into crimson fibers which disappeared into the air, signifying their severance.

The Operator wasted no time as he shot another bullet towards Ryūko's head. Ryūko managed to dodge the bullet by less than inch, moving her head just in time. The Operator chuckled slightly before attaching another thread to the fired bullet, the thread shifting to wrap around Ryūko's neck.

The Operator gave some final words as he began to pull on the thread, "This is the end!"

Suddenly, the thread broke as bakuzan gako had flown through it before being lodged firmly in the ground. Satsuki running in from the

side the blade was thrown before taking the blade out of the ground and assuming her combat stance, her face filled with a righteous fury. She stood in front of her broken sister like a sentinel, her weapons shaking with anticipation as she held back her desire to lunge towards the Operator, unwilling to allow Ryūko to be hurt any further.

The Operator uttered malevolently, "Well I suppose it was only a matter of time… I hope you know that this was nothing personal… Satsuki."

Returning to Rei's predicament, the Reaper appeared to be twirling his scythe, confidently waiting for what he believed was Rei's inevitable demise. "You know I Don't really take pleasure in doing this, I just enjoy the fighting part, but mans gotta do what a mans gotta do-"

His titrate was interrupted however as he began to notice Rei keeling over seeming grabbing her arm, grunting with frustration

The Reaper began to hold his scythe by his side to his side, dropping his casual posture, "Wait what are you-"

He was interrupted once again, as Rei yelled out loudly as she seemed to pull at her injured arm, the arm shaking struggling to stay in place as she strained against the tension of her pull. She finished yelling with a mighty snapping sound as she ripped out the purple threads from the injured arm, the threads wriggling like worms trying to slither out of her grasp. The life fibers took pieces of Rei's flesh with them when they were ripped out, blood was sent flying as Rei's arm flung back, Rei's body having contorted in the direction the arm went.

Rei regained her posture, her damaged arm limp by her side, while she breathed heavily taking out one of her combat knives and glared at the Reaper.

The Reaper stood dumb founded at what he had witnessed, his head filled with consideration, " *Ok admittedly I probably shoulda killed her during that, but damn that was actually kinda hot…* " His thoughts transitioned into speaking out loud as he threatened Rei, "But one arm out for the count and on your own means you're screwed."

"Guess agaiiiiiiin." Suddenly a voice echoed out from Rei's direction before revealing Nui skipping playfully towards both Rei and the Reaper, "Someone took too long~"

After Nui said this, an army of Doppelgangers appeared walking behind her, each baring ominous smiles as Nui called out proudly, "Mon-Mignon Prêt-à-Porter!"

The Reaper scoffed angrily, "Tch make all the doppelgangers you want, I'll still kill you all."

Nui Replied in casual agreement, "Oh I'm sure you will! But its sure gonna take you a lot longer~"

The Reaper responded by attempting to feign ignorance, "And what difference will that make?"

Nui began to bare her teeth in a sinister smile, "Shall I call your bluff?"

The realisation set in as the Reaper uttered beneath his breath, "You bitch…"

Suddenly however the tension was cut open by a ring tone emanating from the Reaper's pocket, the Operator as well receiving a ring tone from a device belonging to him.

"Damn it already?" Muttered the Reaper.

Soon after he said this the Large crimson barrier surrounding them in the distance began to fade away and after less than a second fully

disappeared.

The Reaper spoke into a mic presumably stowed away into his hood, "You seeing this Ops?"

The Operator Replied through his own mic built into his gas mask, "Kind of hard to miss."

The Reaper responded continuing to stare down Nui while the countless doppelgangers began to inch closer on all sides, "That's earlier than we planned right?"

The Operator replied taking a torch sized needle out one of the many pockets on his combat vest continuing to square off against Satsuki, "It is, but nevertheless Nudist beach will on us at any moment, we're leaving."

The Reaper sighed with disappointment, taking out his own needle from his pocket before throwing it down for it to embed into the ground, "Damn and I was so close too…"

The Operator threw out a quick chuckle, "Hm I know the feeling."

As soon as the Reaper threw his needle into the ground, the Nui doppelgangers broke into a sprint, closing in on the Reaper's position. However crimson threads opened up into a portal before the Reaper, who stepped inside causing the threads to close and disappear just before the doppelgangers reached him. The Nui doppelgangers piled up on top of each other with playful laughs.

Nui herself however remained where she was standing pondering at the Reaper's disappearance, "Huh so that's what that does."

Rei turned to Nui, trying to speak coldly but the pain pierced through her voice, "You didn't pursue him yourself."

Nui explained in return while she casually dusted off her clothing and checking it for damage, "Well I didn't know what enlarged needle of

his was for so…"

Rei replied, her tone suggesting her words was that of a jab at Nui's demeanour, "So it seems you've started to care about your own well being I see." Nui Shot a cold glare at Rei however, Rei interrupted any further discussion by changing the subject, "Never mind, lets go find Satsuki and Ryūko."

Back with the other confrontation, the Operator too stood before his own portal made of threads pointing a pistol at Satsuki, "I hope you also know not to chase, or your sister dies."

He then stepped back into his portal, the threads closing and disappearing.

As soon as the Operator made his exit, Satsuki ran back and dropped to her knees by Ryūko's side, who appeared to be un the verge of losing consciousness.

Satsuki desperately called out to her sister, Her face filled with pained concern, "Please Ryūko stay with me! Help will be with us soon!"

Rei and Nui managed to close in on Satsuki's yells, Rei breaking into a run in the yell's direction, while Nui did a casual skip to keep up with Rei but not pass her.

They made it over an upward slope caused by a pile of rubble with Satsuki and Ryūko now in their line of sight, Nui being the first to comment on them, "Woah that looks like it hurts."

"Ryūko!" Rei shouted as she broke into a sprint towards them, her face a cocktail of shock and worry.

Satsuki turned her head as Rei joined her side, "Rei! What happened to your arm?"

Rei spoke in return with agency directed purely at Ryūko, "Never mind, that, what happened?"

Satsuki broke into an explanation, her voice strained with panic, "After I defeated the remaining Servant soldiers, I went to look for Ryūko, it was difficult to find her amongst this battlefield with the destroyed buildings. I managed to get to her while the Operator had a thread around Ryūko's neck so I would say I got to her just in time but… She was like this."

Rei grit her teeth the pain of frustration sprayed on her face, "I'm so sorry lady Satsuki… I should of been with Ryūko, then maybe this wouldn't of happened…"

Satsuki replied shaking her head, "Enough of that Rei, its not your fault, judging on your wounds, I can see that your own foe was no push over, and the fact you chose to fight with Nui instead of leaving her to fight on her own is further proof that she must of needed your help."

Satsuki looked down at Ryūko a shameful look was on her face, "No… the fault lies with me…"

Suddenly Ryūko shouted in angry annoyance as her face twisted in agony, "It's not either of your faults you dumbasses!"

Satsuki reacted with quiet bewilderment, "Ryūko…"

Rei however turned her head to the side towards where Nui was standing, "Nui, is there anything you can do?"

Nui pondered, casually perplexed, "Eh… it seems like the life fibers in her legs have been entirely severed… I could try to build her new legs but its gonna require strong life fibers to self replicate…" Her eye suddenly shone with a realisation, "Oh! Wait a second."

Nui suddenly pierced the side of her chest with one of her claws, reaching inside like she was rummaging through a draw, a stain of

blood stemming from the wound.

Rei looked at Nui in confusion, "Nui what are you-"

Rei's question was interrupted as true Nui pulled out a few life fibers, constraining them within her claw and cutting two of the ends with one of her nails, the threads gleamed with shining crimson stars signifying their power. she then held the threads out proudly as they wiggled in her hand. Her wound closed, it having been healed by clone Nui.

Nui smiled, continuing to exude her pride as her claw reverted back to her flesh covered hand, "Tada~ a new life fiber shipment curtesy of the Reaper!"

Rei's eyes were filled with newfound hope, "Will those be enough?"

Nui Nodded, "Mhm! It may not look like much but these little guys got a whole lotta energy stored in them! I don't know what they're being fed but I want in!"

Nui stepped over to face Ryūko's leg stumps, scrunching the threads between her hands as she did. She then crouched down on one knee and with a calm smile she began to trace her open palms from the top of the stumps ends and over where her legs used to be. As she did so the life fibers shot from her finger tips, the threads forming pitch black legs with rainbow colours flowing through lines along them similar to Nui's life fiber arms. Ryūko squirmed and twitched with discomfort as Nui did this, the sensation seemingly a painful experience for Ryūko. Eventually Nui completed her work, dusting her hands off with a few claps and leaving Ryūko with a fully formed pair of life fiber legs. Perhaps surprisingly the legs shifted colour and texture, becoming the colour of skin matching with the rest of Ryūko's body.

True Nui commentated on this with casual intrigue, "Ooooo that's interesting, I wonder why that happened for you not me, Perhaps because of the difference in our biology."

Clone Nui appeared by her side in her ghostly form with her own comment, although she was in a far less chipper mood, "Maybe its because of the effect her mind has on her life fibers."

The two Nui's exchange was cut off however as Satsuki turned to true Nui, "And these will work will they?"

True Nui nodded once more with a casual vigour, "Yup! How about she give 'em a try?"

These words prompted Ryūko to attempt to stand with her newly formed legs, however she almost immediately fell.

Nui rushed down to meet her, acting with a clumsiness of someone who made a spelling mistake at school, "Oops! Sorry about that, rush job." She then took out a life fiber claw, plunging the tips into the thigh area of her legs around the area where her leg was cut off sending up droplets of blood.

Ryūko once again contorted with pain, while Nui drew out a crimson thread and cut it with her claw, causing the thread to retract back into Ryūko's leg and the wound to seal. After this Ryūko was able to stand up without trouble, but despite this her eyes were overcast and a solemn frown on her face, her demeanour failing to hide her inner turmoil.

"Lady Satsuki! Ryūko!" Before this could be questioned a collective voices rang out from across the battlefield.

The group looked out towards the origin of the voice to see Mako and the Elite four running towards them.

Nonon immediately hugged Satsuki upon reaching them, "I'm so sorry lady Satsuki… I never should of left your side."

Satsuki returned the hug with a consoling smile, "Its alright, we're safe now…"

Gamagōri kneeled before Satsuki, a vision of shame displayed on his face, "No its not alright lady Satsuki… We were powerless to protect you while your life was in danger. Such conduct is pathetic of the elite four…"

This sentiment carried onto the faces of Uzu, Inumuta and still Nonon who stood by somberly.

Satsuki stepped forward to speak to all of the elite four, "Do not let this attack stain your pride, that is what these servants of the thread desire from us. And so we must stand indestructible to these fools that think they can break us."

Each of the elite four replied with stalwart nods, rebuilding their determination in the face of their unbreakable leader.

While the elite four had their own Reunion, Mako hugged Ryūko with a vigorous energy, her affection oozing out as she cried a river of tears, "Thank goodness thank goodness thank goodness… I was so scared Ryūko… I thought I lost you…" Mako looked up at Ryūko who remained silent, "Ryūko?"

As Mako looked up at Ryūko, she could see Ryūko's eyes which were welling up with her own tears, Ryūko only uttering a few pained words, "I'm sorry Mako…" She then left Mako's embrace, walking back in the direction where the elite four came from.

As Ryūko walked away, true Nui watched with a judgemental gleam in her singular eye. Clone Nui also watched Ryūko walk away, her look however was filled with a mix of shame and guilt.

Walking by Ryūko from the same direction was Tsumugu, who gave Ryūko a quick look before looking back to the rest of the group. Nudist beach agents began running by Tsumugu and formed a perimeter surrounding the group, holding needle rifles as they surveyed the battlefield. Tsumugu also motioned with a nod to two of the agents causing them to jog towards Ryūko to accompany her.

Tsumugu spoke to the rest of the group with a clear commanding tone, "Alright lets go, we're heading to HQ."

Rei replied informatorily, "We believe they took the people within the square at the point of the high velocity life fiber jammer's activation hostage."

Tsumugu nodded, "Yeah we thought so too, but that's not something you need to worry about, especially in that state." He gestured again with a nod of his head to another agent causing them to move towards Rei to tend to her wounds, "Besides there's a lot that both of us need to catch up on, so lets go."

With that they all began walking back to exit the battlefield, catching up with Ryūko and being picked up by a nudist beach truck while Tsumugu mounted his motor bike and they all left to return to Nudist beach HQ.

Post egress

The sounds of an unknown machine echoed through a room akin to an open plan penthouse suite. The floor was a black obsidian like coloured concrete, with six pillars made of a similar material leading out from a metal double door akin to an elevator entrance at the centre of the back wall. The front, left and right sides of the room was large windows overlooking a busy city. The room had a lot of incredibly luxurious versions of what would otherwise be typical placements in a penthouse suite, a king size bed at the top left corner of the large room, a massive TV about seven feet tall and twelve feet across at the bottom right of the room, sitting in front of a pit-like square shaped indent into the floor carrying a built in sofa which stretched across the back right and left sides of the pit. All of these lavish designs were suggesting of an extremely wealthy individual.

At the centre however was a large mahogany desk with behind the desk sitting a man facing the door way of the room. He was Dressed in a dark red suit and trousers, a black shirt beneath the dark red jacket and a brighter red tie. He had a smooth dark brown comb over and bright crimson eyes with a fox-like sharpness in his gaze as well as a well defined jawline covered in a mild stubble. He appeared to be growling in pained frustration as he appeared to be strapped into the chair he sat in behind the desk, the chair seemingly some sort of mechanical contraption that shoved see through tubes tipped with needles into his forearms ahead of his rolled up jacket and shirt sleeves, the tubes continually sucked out his blood sending dark red colour through the pipes into the chair's machinery and sending the man's skin into a sickly pale shade.

Behind the man in the chair to the top left of the room appeared to be a woman in a lab coat atop of a pale blue button up shirt tucked into a pair of black suit trousers. The woman had an absurdly large black pony tail and wore a pair of circular rimmed glasses, the shine of the outside light filling the lenses with a white hue and concealing

the woman's eyes. The woman looked into a computer screen attached to a large metal counter.

She suddenly spoke up as she hit a key on a keyboard also built into the metal counter, her voice was that of a cold and calculating analyst, "Alright, that's enough."

The machine built into the chair whirred to a stop, provoking a reaction from the man who spoke with smooth and captivating voice, one you would hear from a charismatic politician, however it was seemingly strained from the pain of this procedure being carried out, "No… Keep going…"

The woman however replied uncaringly, as she stepped to the side of the counter towards the back most window, "If we keep going you'll die, and if you die, everything goes to shit." As she stepped to the side, a compartment at the top of the counter slid open causing a small vial rise from the opening connected to machinery embedded within the metal counter, the small vial filling with a sample of the man's blood, "And besides, we should have more than enough with another batch. And if this sample is anything to go by it should make for some decent growth in the current colony." She took the vial from the machine and held it up to gaze at the blood which glowed in the shine of the sunlight. The change in pose revealing the look in her emerald eyes, a piercing look of ice.

The man however seemed lost in his own thoughts, grumbling to himself quietly, "Another failed mission…"

The woman responded by placing back the vial of blood and walking over to the man's side before sitting on his lap, placing a hand on his chest and smiling slyly, "Come on now, we knew it wasn't gonna be that simple, its only been a year after all, this is all new territory. And anyway one mission may have been a failure but the other one wasn't now was it?"

Before the the man had a chance to respond, the doors at the entrance to the suite slid open allowing another individual; a man

dressed what appeared to be servant of the threads attire to step inside, "Mr CEO? The directors are awaiting you in the board room."

This prompted the woman to step away from the man in the chair, while said man in chair replied, signifying him to be the CEO, "Thank you, me and the Researcher will be there in just a moment."

The woman chuckled as the individual at the door left, the door closing behind him. the woman seeming to be the Researcher, "Hm I still think that this "the Researcher" is a ridiculous name."

The CEO cracked a smile as the straps on his seat released, allowing the CEO to stand up and straighten out his suit, "Alright, lets go."

Four spot lights shone in an otherwise pitch black room. Within the first two spotlights appeared to be sitting was the Reaper and the Operator, on the other end of the room in the forth spot light sat what appeared to be a gruff looking man with what seemed to be a large burn across his face. He had grey long hair, a matching grey pointed beard and brown weathered eyes carrying a seemingly indescribably cold rage. His clothes however appeared to be that of the Executioner's, although he was missing the gauntlets, boots and obviously the helmet. He sat with his arms crossed impatiently staring across at the Operator. The third spotlight was right of the grey haired man and was next to head of the the table, however the individual sitting there appeared to be concealed as they were surrounded by tall stacks of paper in front of them as all four of the individuals were sitting in front of a large seemingly round table. The table being only partially visible in the spot light but otherwise was concealed in the pitch black darkness.

Suddenly another spotlight switched on, revealing the CEO to be sitting at the head of the table in the middle of the four other spotlights. He leaned in with his elbows resting on the table as he hooked his fingers together forming a bridge with his arms, a rather familiar pose for only the most astute of leaders. Close by him stood

the Researcher, her hands in her pockets and a smug smile on her face as the lenses in her glasses shined once more, hiding her eyes.

The CEO spoke up calmly addressing everyone in the room, "Well its good to see you're all in fine shape."

The man with the grey hair scoffed angrily with a simple, "Hmph."

This caused the CEO to address this with a sigh, "You have something to add Executioner?"

The man confirmed to be the Executioner replied, the enraged frustration carrying through his voice, "Oh only just that some here don't deserve to be in as fine a shape as others."

Suddenly the Reaper shouted from across the room explosively, "Hey! What the hell is that supposed to mean?!"

The Executioner responded to the Reaper's confrontation with a cold glare, "What I mean is your's and the Operator's failure to dispatch ANY of your targets is absolutely pathetic, if I was on that mission all of those fools would be six feet under."

Before the Reaper could shout back, the Operator spoke up instead, replying with a more calm and controlled tone, "Our plan was well thought out and only failed because of the unexpected malfunction of the high velocity life fiber jammer."

The Executioner replied with another angered scoff, "Hm save your excuses, next time I will be the one to destroy those traitors, you both aren't even fit to clean my shoes."

This remark only served to further anger the Reaper who went to shout back angrily, "You bastard!-"

This was cut off however as a voice suddenly interrupted the Reaper, the voice coming from behind the stacks of papers, "That's enough all of you! Do you have no respect at all for the CEO?!"

The room quickly fell silent, the voice having quickly dispelled the argument.

The CEO broke the silence, setting his arms down on the table and addressing the voice, "Thank you Handler. And yes I do find your squabbling rather disrespectful… We are supposed to be the progenitors of humanity's salvation and we can't do that if we're at each other's throats. Sure the mission didn't go as planned, but I am sure that we have have struck fear into the hearts of our enemies, and with the life fibers we are gathering and my blood, our life fiber colony's growth will only grow exponentially larger as time goes on, and that is what matters."

The CEO's words seemed to soothe the remaining tension from the room, with even a faint little clap being heard from behind "the Handler's" stacks of papers.

The CEO turned his head to the side to speak to the Researcher, "How is the new specimen from America?"

The Researcher responded analytically, pushing up her glasses, "Rather feisty it seems, the intelligence level that of a rabid animal, probably to decrease it's energy output given it's been living in the desert for a while. It should calm down a bit if we feed it some of your blood, then it should acclimate to assimilation within the colony."

The CEO nodded, taking in the information, "I see… And what about my blood? Are energy levels provided to the life fibers remaining stable?"

The Researcher nodded in return her voice being filled with a reluctantly impressed tone, "Yeah still an entire regular sync person's body's worth for every drop of your blood, no matter how many batches we take."

"Excellent." The CEO replied before turning to announce to the rest of the room with a proud smile, "Now I need all of you to pull

together, so we can be the saviours of humanity that we need to be, not just for the world… But for Ragyō's will."

Meanwhile half a day had passed back in nudist beach HQ, true Nui appeared to be strapped to her own metallic chair situated at the centre of a clinical looking operating theatre. She was in her pink bra and panties with white thrills while a dozen white circular electrodes was attached to her forearms, chest, belly and forehead, the cables from these appearing to feed into some machinery featuring a monitor which displayed a heart monitor as well as several other line charts appearing for seemingly obscure functions although one seemed to be tagged as "Life fiber energy levels." She also appeared to have tubes tipped with needles implanted into her right arm's veins taped down with clear medical tape. While one seemed to draw blood, the other was filled with a clear liquid leading from an IV drip filled with the same fluid.

Around Nui were three nudist beach agents who were operating the medical monitoring equipment, their faces were that of a cold cautious professionality.

Nui sighed with frustrated impatience, "Ugh, how long are these "check ups" gonna take? Everyone else has probably left already!"

One of the agents, a woman with short black hair and blue fierce looking eyes walked over to Nui with an annoyed fed up expression, "Alright you're free to go." She said as she tore off the tape and took the needles out from Nui's arm before undoing the straps on the medical chair.

Once the straps were undone, Nui yawned with relief stretching out her arms before she ripped off the electrodes, "Phew! I thought I would be stuck here foreeeeeveeeer." Nui suddenly perked up with attention as she looked closely at the agent who was tearing off one more of the electrodes off Nui's stomach, "Ooooo, you're cute! I bet you would look great in a dress! Wanna be my model some time?~"

The agent refused to respond however as she simply grimaced then walked away.

Nui jumped off the chair, continuing stretch her arms out casually, "Hm, must not be her type…" She then disappeared into a miniature hurricane of crimson fibers before reappearing in her usual outfit while the agents in the room watched her nervously.

She proceeded to waltz casually towards metal double doors featuring circular glass windows at the backmost end of the room. She pushed them open before looking to the right to see Mikisugi leaning against the wall, seemingly reading through a stapled together stack of papers.

Nui leaned forward staring at Mikisugi with a smug expression, "Ooooo were you waiting there for me the entire time time?"

Mikisugi stepped off from his lean turning to Nui with a bemused smile, "Don't flatter yourself sweet heart, I just got here a few minutes ago." He raised the stack of papers slightly which he cradled in one of his arms, "This is pretty good by the way."

Nui frowned with irritation as the two began walking right with Mikisugi in front, Nui closed her eye as she sighed, "You got some nerve making me write a report like that."

Mikisugi gestured casually carrying the same bemused smile, "Oh come on you must have written some reports for your missions with REVOCS as well right?"

Nui huffed crossing her arms, "Well of course I did, and that was boring as well! But at least they let me use a type writer."

Mikisugi replied in a slightly surprised tone, "A type writer?"

Nui nodded joyfully, "Mhm! Its not too much different than that keyboard you got me to use but the ticking of the gears and clicking of the keys of the type writer were a lot more soothing to listen to,

plus I didn't have to deal with using the program thingamajigs those computers need me to use."

Mikisugi, answered with an absent minded tone as he began flicking through Nui's report as he walked, "Hm, well maybe we'll get you one, if you behave well…"

Nui's voice trailed off as her thoughts moved to something else, "By the way… How is little Hōōmaru?"

Mikisugi's attention perked up mildly intrigued as he looked back for a second over his shoulder, "Well now that's a surprise, didn't expect you to shown concern over anyone else, especially Rei."

Nui replied checking her nails casually, "Hm don't be silly. Its not concern per say, more like… curiosity."

Mikisugi sighed before responding with a doubting tone, "Right… Well she has a broken arm and a large amount of damage to the muscle tissue, however most of the nerves are pretty intact, so with a bit of surgery she should make a decent recovery."

Nui nodded contemplatively, "I see…" She perked up once more however, "Oh also how is Ryūko?"

Mikisugi looked back with a suspecting look, "You would think you would remember the time you sewed new pair of legs onto a person."

Nui scoffed with Irritation, "Come on you know that's not what I mean, I saw her wonder off like a lost child with a dreadful look on her face."

Mikisugi smiled again with bemusement, "Wow, Nui Harime caring about one person's physical well being and another person's emotional health? Now I really have seen everything."

Nui grit her teeth with a frustrated look, "Ugh can you just tell me already?!"

Mikisugi replied, a more relaxed look of frustration on his face, "Well… She's pretty down to say the least… This fight must have hit her hard."

Nui spoke with a curious confusion, "Hm now thats odd, doesn't sound like the Ryūko that cut my arms off and defeated lady Ragyō… Sounds rather pathetic really, I wonder if that year of peace has made her weak."

Mikisugi suddenly turned around and glared at Nui angrily. Nui's face was hit with a casual surprise, seemingly not having expecting such a reaction.

Mikisugi quickly simmered down however, letting out a frustrated sigh, "You know, some times I can't even tell if you realise you're saying the exact right thing to piss someone off." Nui continued staring at Mikisugi with a confused look while he turned to the side pinching the bridge of his nose with a closed eyed exasperated expression, "Look could you just switch over to clone Nui? I'm sure she's tired of that room by now anyway."

True Nui sighed while she crossed her arms, muttering to herself, "Well so much for the typewriter…" She was then surrounded by life fibers for a moment before they quickly disappeared revealing clone Nui to be standing in her place.

Clone Nui gave Mikisugi a remorseful look, "I'm sorry about that Mr Mikisugi…"

Mikisugi's face changed to a weary warm smile, "It's alright, I guess its getting a bit harder to keep my cool with everything going on…"

Nui replied with a similar weary tone, her eye at a downward slant, "Yeah I know the feeling…" She perked up however speaking with a more hopeful tone, "I'm glad that Rei is alright though, she really

saved my life back there. Could you also elaborate more on what's going on with Ryūko? I'm really worried about her…"

Mikisugi felt the tenderness behind clone Nui's intentions, "Well she's holding up at Satsuki's place in one of her rooms and is refusing to come out or talk to anyone. I think Mako mentioned that she acted like this before after she went berserk wearing Senketsu. Surprisingly enough the original Nui was a heavy factor in getting her return to the fight, her using a disguise to get Ryūko to wear Senketsu again."

True Nui appeared in a ghostly form, floating beside clone Nui, exclaiming in a nostalgic tone, "Oh yeah! I remember that! Never thought I would see Ryūko acting like that again after everything."

Clone Nui ignored this to continue talking to Mikisugi, "Hm… I feel like I'm at fault for this… Maybe I should go apologise to her."

Mikisugi gave a slight chuckle in return, "I'm not sure that's the best idea, besides how are YOU feeling after everything that happened?"

Nui tried to eek out a comforting tone, "Oh I'm alright…"

Mikisugi raised an eyebrow detecting the shakiness in Nui's voice, "Are you really?"

Nui suddenly burst into tears as she wrapped her arms around Mikisugi, "No… I was so scared! I thought I was gonna die…"

Mikisugi failed to react for a moment in his surprise before he patted Nui's back soothingly, "That must of been really hard for you, you did well to make it through all of that, you're safe now…"

Nui pulled away from Mikisugi, attempting to wipe the tears away from her singular eye, "The worst part is… If I do die, no ones gonna miss me… I'm not even gonna be a foot note… I'm gonna die alone…"

Mikisugi crouched down just beneath Nui's height, placing his hand on her shoulder, "Hey! Hey… I'm not gonna let that happen you hear? You're not gonna have to go through any of this alone, neither you nor the other you, we're gonna be with you all the way."

Nui sniffed to pull up a small drop of snot back into her nose, the drop having leaked out from her crying, "Thank you Mr Mikisugi…"

The two then proceeded to begin walking right once again, this time side by side.

After a few paces, Nui looked to her side at Mikisugi inquisitively, "Erm Mr Mikisugi? I was wondering if you could answer one more of my questions."

Mikisugi gave her a quick calm, "Fire away."

Nui replied, questioning tentatively, "Do you know what happened to the civilians in the city square?"

Mikisugi sighed with mild frustration, "I wish I did, haven't found any of them, not even bodies."

Nui's face was hit with a quiet terror, "R-really?"

Mikisugi continued, lost in the subject, "Yeah… Not sure if they all are buried under rubble or taken to where ever the servants went, possibly to be used as food for their life fibers, perhaps used for experimentation or maybe a bit of both…"

Nui failed to reply, causing Mikisugi to look to the side to see Nui having stopped walking a pace or two ago and was shaking with a horrified expression on her face.

Mikisugi stopped, his face showing his guilt, "Ah shit… I'm sorry Nui."

Nui suddenly shook her head as she raised a hand up at Mikisugi, while with her other hand she seemed to hold her hip in an attempt

to stop herself from shaking, "N-no its alright… I should have been prepared for something like that."

Mikisugi replied while he rubbed his chin wearily, "I'm gonna take you back to your hotel room, use the usual protocol of true Nui answering the door. Make sure you take some time off school till we can ensure there isn't too much of a security risk. Also don't leave your room without being escorted by Nudist beach agents. Got enough trouble going on without the other Nui going AWOL. You got that?"

Nui gave a little salute as she stood up straight like a soldier at attention, "Yes sir!"

Nui then continued walking forward only for Mikisugi to interrupt her, "Oh and Nui?" Nui's gaze shifted to Mikisugi who began talking in a tentative tone once again, "I know things are real tough right now, but remember what I said; you're not alone, we'll brave this storm together. And I know true Nui likes to act all tough, but I think she's gonna need to remember that as well."

Clone Nui smiled thankfully, however this was disrupted by her starting to convulse as a stream of blood rushed out from her arm floating in the air and forming a blood version of true Nui who stuck her tongue out at Mikisugi, "Says you! Naked monkey!"

Mikisugi drove Nui to the hotel in the naked shooting star, quickly dropping her off as Nudist agents met her out front and took her inside. Mikisugi then went back to the Nudist beach HQ, making his way down into the underground beach complex, Nudist agents saluting him as he walked past them. Moving through corridors connected to the beach through a large building he reached a metal sliding door a few meters away from another metal sliding door.

Mikisugi placed his hand on an electronic panel next to the door causing it to slide open. Inside was a darkened room overlooking an interrogation room through a one-way mirror.

In the room was Tsumugu, who stood overlooking the interrogation room with crossed arms, however he broke his attention away to turn his head to meet Mikisugi's entrance, "Yo, nice of you to show up."

Mikisugi was all down to business as he walked inside to stand by Tsumugu, "So what have we got on our guests?" He looked into the interrogation room to see a Nudist agent sitting at a metal table across from an average looking man in his underwear, the man looking about in fearful confusion.

Tsumugu sighed in frustration, "Nothing, not on a single one of the whole group we recovered got connections to REVOCS or Honnōji academy, hell most of them don't even have a criminal history."

Mikisugi questioned further, rubbing his chin, "Well have they gave away any information on their operations?"

Tsumugu shook his head, "No they haven't and you wanna know the worst thing about it? Its not that they're giving us the silent treatment, they're straight up claiming that they don't even know who the servants of the thread are, and as weird as it is to say, it doesn't even seem like they're lying, so either they are the best actors I've ever seen in an interrogation, or the info has leaked straight outta their brains."

"That might be closer to the truth than you would think." Suddenly a voice spoke out from the doorway, commanding Mikisugi's and Tsumugu's attention revealing it to be the one and only Shirō Iori. He looked no different than a year ago, his blond hair tied into a decently sized pony tail, while his slim figure was wrapped in a lab coat over nudist beach gear. He held a clip board while he looked at Mikisugi and Tsumugu with a clinical but warm gaze and a calm friendly smile.

"Iori!" Mikisugi spread his arms open with a joyful smile upon seeing Shirō, "I'm glad you made it."

Iori nodded, "Of course, I came as soon as I heard what happened, although I've been drowning in work over at R n' D."

Tsumugu replied in a casual tone, however his eyes still carried his usual sternness, "You sure you should be here instead of studying? you got the fast pass to university, would be dumb as hell to throw that away."

Iori chuckled as he answered, "You kidding? I wouldn't miss this for the world, besides the return of the life fibers like this could be perfect for my dissertation…"

Mikisugi responded inquisitively, "Well going back to the original topic, what did you mean by "Closer to the truth than you would think?"

Iori began to elaborate, his tone was clear and straight to the point, "Well while our servant friends were being treated in medical, I went to pay them a visit, given they were using life fibers, I thought it would be prudent to check for possible left over effects. And so I examined each of the servants and began to notice something peculiar around the top of each of their heads; slight indents, very subtle but each of them seemed to have them. So I ordered an MRI scan on each of their brains, took a fair while as you might think, but when I looked at the results I saw…" Iori Took a couple pieces of paper from his clip board before handing one to Mikisugi and Tsumugu, "This."

Displayed on each piece was an X-ray-like image of a person's head, displaying the brain as well as the outer layers of their skull and skin. Also on the image however appeared to be a number of dots within the many of wrinkles of the person's brain, like dust was floating around inside their head.

Mikisugi peered at the images with an oncoming familiarity, "Wait… thats…"

Iori added on, finishing Mikisugi's train of thought, "holes."

Tsumugu reiterated, questioning Iori to ensure he heard correctly, "Holes?"

Iori nodded, "Indeed, tiny holes on the inside of their brain, a decent indication… Of mind stitching."

Mikisugi's and Tsumugu's eyes widened with the realisation, Mikisugi muttering in his shock, "Wait… Are you saying these people were mind controlled?"

Iori responded, now baring a serious expression to match the heightened tension, "I think its a bit more nuanced than that, look here." He pointed at specific parts on the images, namely around the central bottom part of the brain where the central lobe was, "The holes are largely concentrated around the hippocampus on all the individuals I had scanned. While under mind stitching it is possible for the subject to undertake complicated actions, however they need to be directed very specifically by the one who is pulling the strings. Here however these individuals have agency, and can make individual actions."

Tsumugu squinted at Iori signifying his impatience, "You mind getting to the point?"

Iori looked at the individual in the interrogation room, "My point is; I think the mind stitching in these cases was used to affect the servant's memories. I think they were taken by the servants of the thread then was made to believe that they had always been servants themselves since the organisation's inception. And when these individuals were defeated in combat, the mind stitching was ejected, and the memories regarding the servants of the threads along with it."

Mikisugi grasped his chin as he tried to think through the many implications behind this, "Wait so if that's true, they can take any individual without any previous history with the life fibers and turn them into loyal servant soldiers…"

Iori gave Mikisugi a simple nod, "Indeed."

Tsumugu was the next to ponder about what this could entail, "That could explain our information leaks…"

Mikisugi added on to Tsumugu's pondering, "And it could explain what the servants are doing with at least some of the people they abducted from Akihabara city square." Mikisugi turned to Iori, "Alright, I want checks conducted on all Nudist beach personnel, try to see if they got those indents or if the servants have some way of hiding signs of the mind stitching."

Iori sighed with exasperation, "I'll add it to the pile…"

Mikisugi scratched his head awkwardly, "Oh uh… Sorry about that…"

Iori shook his head before gesturing towards the door, "Don't worry about it, I'm sure things are gonna start getting busy for you as well, but in the mean time could you two accompany me to R n' D? There's a few more things I think is prudent to show you."

The three left the small room to walk further down the corridors, taking a series of turns before reaching what appeared to be a large shutter with a small cubicle-like building sitting close by against the left wall containing an agent setting at a desk with a slanted monitor. The agent appeared to be distracted, reading through some sort of magazine for male swim wear, possibly the same issue left on the floor of the back seats in Mikisugi's naked shooting star. The three walked to the right of the building and Mikisugi knocked on the glass of the the cubicle causing the agent to jump to attention before hitting a button situated in front of him while he blushed heavily. Suddenly two panels in the black steel wall slid open revealing an elevator. The three stepped inside and Tsumugu hit a button causing the doors to slide shut and the elevator to rise. The elevator opened up to reveal another corridor leading to a pair of foggy glass sliding double doors. The doors slid open upon the three's approach revealing a large rectangular white walled pristine laboratory area,

where rows of long counters stretched across the room. The lab had many nudist beach agents cloaked in lab coats doing various things ranging from testing with chemicals, testing the durability of a black metal-like material presumably the material used to create life fiber severing weaponry, using pliers and various other tools to toy with circuitry, drawing up blue prints, looking down microscopes or writing on clipboards.

At the wall to the right end of the laboratory was large windows reaching across the entire wall, the windows seemingly overlooking a massive empty area seemingly made of a grey smooth stone separated into a square grid across the ground and walls, likely an arena for their more extreme tests.

Iori led Mikisugi and Tsumugu to one of the counters where an agent was standing. As Iori approached, the agent left the desk for a few seconds before returning with a metal case which they set on the table.

Iori uttered a "Thank you." To the agent, who nodded before walking away. Iori stood before the case before turning his head to Mikisugi and Tsumugu as he clicked open the latches on the case, "I reconstructed their broken firearms, which appeared to be just standard Military rifles. The bullets however are more interesting."

The case swung open Revealing a glass cylindrical container holding what appeared to be a single bullet propped up by a metal stand attached to the inside of the container.

Iori opened the container from a glass lid on it's right end and took out the bullet, holding it up between his thumb and index finger, "That report you sent around, it was rather well written but out everything it mentioned, the Reaper's scythe stood out the most to me as these bullets seem to share the same function, placing Life fibers inside people's bodies to harm them from the inside."

Mikisugi questioned almost shocked, "Wait for real? How strong are they?"

Iori answered looking at the bullet with his clinical gaze, "Based on the life fiber energy levels and amount of life fibers in the bullet, no where near as strong as what was described about the scythe in the report, one could slow the healing of a life fiber hybrid for about one or two seconds but it would take a few more to do the kind of damage that scythe did, makes sense since they are for an automatic rifle afterall."

Mikisugi nodded before asking another question, this time however he seemed to have noticeable reluctance in his voice, "I see, by the way… Do you think you could use the remaining life fibers left by the servants to make Goku uniforms?"

Tsumugu turned to Mikisugi in genuine surprise, "Aikurō?!"

Iori ignored this as he answered Mikisugi's question, "Hm I thought you might ask me about that…" He gestured to another agent who took a lap top from their desk before handing it to Iori

Iori nodded to the agent before opening the laptop, the screen switching on show what appeared to be the feed of a recording, "Observe."

In the video there was box made of reinforced glass held together by a metal frame, situated on a metal pedestal. Within the box appeared to be a single life fiber, inert and still. A nudist agent walked to beside the box holding a syringe of blood. The agent opened a circular cap at the top of the box holding the cap as they took the syringe and held it above the gap created. As they loosed a single drop of blood, they suddenly shut the cap and dashed away from the box. As soon as the drop of blood hit the thread, the life fiber suddenly burst into movement violently whipping around the box leaving deep scratches on the reinforced glass.

Mikisugi and Tsumugu stood wide eyed, as Iori shut the laptop, Tsumugu uttering a quiet, "Holy shit…"

Iori nodded, his gaze solemn and tense, "Indeed, it seems the loss of their primordial life fiber has sent them into quite the frenzy, either that or a stimulus spreading through the collective consciousness. Wearing even ten percent of these threads would be asking to be devoured."

Mikisugi was hit instantly with confusion, "But then how are the servants…?"

Iori cut him off with a defeated shrug, "I wish I knew… Some sort of limiter perhaps? Or maybe a direct behavioural control for each life fiber? I could guess for days and still be left stumped."

Tsumugu decided to cut in to put an end to the speculation, "Well that doesn't matter, what matters is that we gotta figure out some way for a counter attack, otherwise these assholes are gonna keep dancing around us and we won't be able to do jack shit."

Mikisugi grit his teeth with frustration, "But is there any way how? They got all the information and we can't even tell where they're gonna be next…"

Suddenly the glass door entrance to the lab slid open, "There's a way!" And at the door was the tired, breathless face of doctor Xavier Natrium.

Pissed off

An air of shock filled the laboratory from the sudden entrance of the red haired man, Mikisugi being the first to call out, "Doctor Xavier?!"

Xavier hunched over with his hands on his knees, trying to catch his breath, "Y-yes, sorry to keep you waiting…" He then regained his posture, straightening out his black tie beneath his suit and lab coat before walking towards Tsumugu, Mikisugi and Iori stopping two paces away.

Tsumugu replied in a matter of fact tone, "Hard to wait for a guy we thought was dead."

Xavier smiled with exasperation, "Well its nice to hear your concern Tsumugu, oh and I really got to compliment your bunker designs, I only felt a bit of shaking and a loss in communications despite the size of the crater left behind."

Mikisugi uttered inquisitively, "Well I am glad to see you are alright, but what are you doing here? Surely your government would like some assistance regarding the clean up and investigation."

Xavier responded with warm professionality, "Actually I expressly got permission to come to Japan by the American government, they even let me take one of their private jets, plus I knew where I was needed as soon as I heard what was going on over here."

Tsumugu sighed with irritation, "A simple phone call to know that you were coming would have been nice…"

Xavier explained defensively, "I was on a plane most of the time! And I wanted a bit of shut eye from an absolutely exhausting experience. Besides I wasn't sure if your people were too busy to take time for my call."

Iori uttered curiously, his voice suggesting of the verge of a realisation, "Doctor Xavier…" His voice raised as the realisation hit, "Doctor Xavier Natrium?"

Xavier raised his eyebrows in response to his name being mentioned, "hm yes?"

Iori took a few steps forward offering a hand for Xavier to shake, "My name is Shirō Iori, you probably haven't heard of me."

Xavier was hit with his own realisation as he returned the handshake, "Oh Shirō Iori! Its a pleasure to meet such a flourishing young mind."

Mikisugi and Tsumugu peered at the two with suspicion, Mikisugi being the one to comment on the two, "Uh… you two know each other?"

Iori explained first as him and Xavier looked towards Tsumugu and Mikisugi with calm giddy smiles, "I read his thesis on life fiber communications." Iori turned his head back to Xavier, "Inspiring work by the way, the section about the difference in wave forms between human communications and life fiber signals was truly enlightening."

Xavier turned his head back as well, "Thank you. I read about your work as well from the Honnōji reports, those Goku uniforms were truly incredible, really does show versatile life fibers can be as weapons. Although I do find some of your methods for experimentation a little… Inhumane."

Iori sighed, his face becoming somewhat forlorn, "I agree… We did use some extreme measures for results, the justification was for the sake of saving humanity but… It did trouble me, even in my personal life…"

Xavier replied, his voice suggesting an attempt at comfort, "We all come close to that line when attempting to understand this universe

of ours, it becomes easy to cross that line when important justifications bring the mentality of for the greater good…"

Tsumugu cut in attempting to pull the conversation back on track, "Well that's real nice for you two, but you mind getting back to business? You can have your life fiber groupie meet up later."

Xavier answered with bemused frustration, "Oh Tsumugu, how I do appreciate your… unique tactlessness." His tone then shifted to a relaxed professionality, "Well while I had the time, I've thought of what I think could be a way for a counter attack against the servants of the thread."

Tsumugu shifted his position to a more relaxed posture, "Hm well now that's more like it."

Mikisugi questioned curiously, "Really? Well now that would be quite something, but we can't discuss it here…"

The majority of the group looked around them at the many Nudist beach agents in the room, while Xavier looked at the others of the group in confusion.

Iori spoke up, breaking what tension there was, "Hm, how about a conference room? Will be fairly private and won't be difficult to sweep."

Mikisugi nodded, "Yeah that makes sense, I think there's one I know is empty right now."

The group got ready to leave while Xavier continued looking confused, "Could you explain why we can't talk about it here?"

Iori turned to Xavier while Mikisugi and Tsumugu began walking towards the doors, "We'll explain why later, doctor."

The four made their way down the elevator, along a few more corridors, left the underground beach area and arrived at a series of

elevators on two sides a lobby like area where agents continually walked in an out filling the area with their steps and chattering. They located one of the elevators, selecting one of the buttons on the control panel to the left. After a few moments of waiting the elevator dinged before opening allowing the group to step inside to join a group agents waiting patiently. With a press of another button, this time inside the elevator, and a few more moments of waiting while the elevator opened and closed at a series of floors, they finally arrived at their floor. The elevator opening up on a smaller lobby like area with elevators on both sides. the back end of this lobby lead to a large hall with a smooth reflective black stone wall and floor, the walls held a number of plaques featuring writing whilst other parts of the walls held large framed photographs of various agents depicted with medals, rifles and standing amongst large groups of other agents posing for the picture. There was also a number of other furnishings along the hall, such as velvet coated benches, water coolers and vending machines, potted plants and what appeared to be propped up control panel screens on metal pedestals. Nudist agents walked up and down the hall casually, some carrying tacks of papers or cups filled with either water, steaming coffee or tea.

Along the walls of the hall were a series of large oak double doors with a fair amount of space between each of the doors, each one having a plaque close by. The four walked along the hall till they located one of the double doors with a plaque reading "B2" Mikisugi leading the way before opening them up.

Behind the door was a decently sized rectangular conference room. A large table ran through the centre of the room, while some cabinets and a water cooler was situated at points against the right and left navy blue walls. At the back wall was a large screen, with the head of the table was just in front of the screen.

As soon as the group entered the room, Tsumugu got to work. He checked along the beneath of chairs along the table, the bottom of the table itself, the insides of the cabinets, along the bottom of the cabinets and removed the screen from the back checking behind it,

along it's edges and unscrewing the back to check the inside. All of these checks being for possible bugs placed in the room by moles. Once he had finished he returned to the rest of the group who stood to the left of the table, he then nodded at Mikisugi affirming their security.

Mikisugi turned to Xavier, "Alright we're clear, so what's this idea you got?"

Xavier tried to recollect his thoughts, somewhat taken aback by the sudden secretive measures, "O-oh right well, I was looking at the feed of the communications we picked up back in the desert, which I now believe is being sent by the servants of the thread. Comparing it once again to the true life fiber signal, it seems fairly well hidden of a signal with the low but far reaching frequency, however if they intended to make it seem like a true life fiber signal then there was a lot of flaws in it's design…"

Mikisugi theorised inquisitively, "Hm, do you think that it was intentional?"

Xavier's face was hit with turmoil as he attempted to think through that possibility, "Maybe… Although I struggle as to guess why… But it did get me thinking, what if we created a signal as closed to being a real life fiber signal? Perhaps then… we could fool these servants of the thread into believing a location carries real life fibers, but they will just have a nude party waiting for them instead."

Mikisugi nodded with a sly smile, "Nice… I like it, how long do you think it would take to create this signal?"

Xavier pondered to himself, his thoughts lost in calculations, "Hmm… I would say… two months, maybe more."

Tsumugu scoffed angrily, "Tch why don't ya build a laboratory from ground up while you're at it?"

Xavier sighed with exasperation, "I'm not baking a pastry my dear Tsumugu, it would be attempting to create something that hasn't even been attempted let alone perfected like this, I should earn a Nobel prize if I pull this off! Well… Maybe."

Mikisugi cut off the discussion calmly, "Its alright, we'll need time to prepare anyway, such as more counter measures for their weaponry." He then turned to Iori and Xavier, "Alright here's the plan; Xavier, I need you to select what agents you want to work with on this signal, don't tell them what the project his during the selection process, then you hand a list of those people to Iori and he will put them on the priority for screening. Once they are screened, we'll get you Xavier and your new team a private lab to work on this, in the mean time, none of this leaves this room the servants cannot be allowed the slightest possibility of getting this information."

Tsumugu added on, asking with a plain cold demeanour, "What about Matoi? She's kinda out for the count and that little trooper of yours; Harime isn't gonna be enough, even if I join her in trying to kick their asses."

Mikisugi responded meeting Tsumugu's brooding coldness with relaxed enthusiasm, "Well we got plenty of time to get Ryūko's groove back."

Iori decided to cut in inquisitively, "By the way… Since you mentioned Nui Harime would it be possible for me meet her some time? For purely scientific reasons."

Xavier added on, "Oh I would like to meet her as well! A life fiber hybrid that came back from the dead, split into two personalities AND was the grand couturier for REVOCS? What self respecting life fiber researcher would give up the opportunity?"

Tsumugu muttered to himself with irritation, "Like to see if you would say that when she's trying to kill you…"

Mikisugi considered the motion for a sec before ruling his judgement, "Hm shouldn't be too much of a problem, but probably not a good idea at the moment with the security concerns and everything going on." Iori and Xavier nodded, accepting his ruling, Mikisugi then continued to finish the conversation, "Alright boys, meeting is adjourned, and remember; until you can be sure the agents you are with are clear, not a word about our plans and not a word even if they have been cleared unless they are involved in the plan's preparation."

The other three nodded before proceeding to leave the conference room.

The sun had fully set as Clone Nui sat in her hotel room on her sofa, watching a news report on the events in Akihabara. She had tried to fall asleep several times, however she was left tossing and turning, unable to suppress the thoughts flooding her mind.

She sighed as the news reporter spoke about the left over damage from the battle including a large square shape gash. The hole reaching down into the sewer, disrupting the sewer water current for the period of time during the barrier's appearance. Then when the barrier disappeared, a large sewer tidal wave was caused, bursting out from drainages and sending sewage out onto many of Akihabara's streets.

True Nui appeared floating by clone Nui's side, she was lying down on her stomach, cupping her head in her arms and casually kicking her legs in the air, "Oooo those naughty servants made a real mess."

Clone Nui uttered quietly, a solemn frown on her face, "Those poor people…"

True Nui checked her nails with a bored expression, "A bit of sewage on the streets is pretty gross but its not the end of the world."

Clone Nui bounced in her seat to turn to true Nui, "Its not just that! All those destroyed buildings… It probably ruined some people's lives!

that is if they weren't in the buildings during the explosions…"

True Nui continued looking bored as she seemed to manifest a translucent pink nail file, presumably from the pocket dimension room she was in, before dragging it across the tips of her nails, "We can't really help them so there's no point worrying about them."

Clone Nui sharpened her gaze, "You could help them."

True Nui replied, sighing with irritation, "Oh please Nui I can create a bunch of doppelgangers, not magic up a bunch of people's livelihoods out of thin air. And besides Mikisugi gave you express orders to stay put remember? Or are you gonna finally give up that good girl façade?"

Clone Nui grumbled, turning back towards the TV, "Its not a façade…"

True Nui observed clone Nui's grumbling, she then perked up and slithered like a snake in the air before pretending to rest her floating head on clone Nui's shoulder, "Oh cheer up! I know someone we could help~"

Clone Nui was hit with intrigue at the very possibility of true Nui wanting to help someone else, "Really? Who is that?"

True Nui leapt up into the air floating somewhat away from the sofa, her arms spread and her face radiating a giddy joy, "Ryūko!~"

Clone Nui responded, overwhelmed by confusion, "R-Ryūko?"

True Nui nodded, "Mhm!" She then crawled back to the sofa, looking like she was swimming in an invisible liquid, "I was the one that got her out of a serious funk back in our original days remember?"

Clone Nui glared at true Nui with irritation, "So you could trick her into fighting you."

True Nui corrected clone Nui arrogantly, "Less of a fight more of an execution really… But that's besides the point! I still managed to get Ryūko up and moving again, didn't I?"

Clone Nui's glare returned to a troubled weary frown, "I guess… But I'm not sure if we're able to help this time and Mikisugi would agree."

True Nui huffed in frustration, "Jeez that Mikisugi doesn't know what he's talking about! And don't you want to at least try to help?"

Clone Nui whined helplessly, "I guess… But I don't know if apologising will be enough…"

True Nui presented herself proudly, "Then let me take over!"

"What?!" Clone Nui suddenly exclaimed in surprise.

True Nui continued unbothered, "Yeah! Trust me I know exactly how to push Ryūko's buttons."

Clone Nui shouted back angrily, "That's exactly what I'm worried about! And besides what about what Mikisugi said?! if they see that you're heading to Satsuki's house they might think you're trying to attack Ryūko while she's vulnerable and trigger the kill switch!"

True Nui began baring a smug smile, "Oh relax other me, they aren't foolish enough to kill one of their best assets after just being attacked by a terrorist group."

Clone Nui breathed deeply trying to build up her confidence, "Ok ok… IF we do this… What will you say to Ryūko?"

True Nui smiled mischievously, "Only what I've always said… The truth!"

The world outside began to be bathed with morning light as the sun crawled its way above the horizon. Mikisugi was lying down in the bed within his apartment, he was nude of course, rustling beneath his bed sheets, moving about in his sleep. Suddenly the room began

filling with a ring tone emanating from his phone situated on his bedside table. Mikisugi's closed eyes twitched as he slowly dragged himself from sleep, reaching over to his phone with a slow and sluggish grab.

He picked up his phone selecting the answer call option and placing his phone against his ear before answering with a half asleep groan, "Mikisugi speaking… Who is it?"

An agent responded from the other end of the phone, "Hello sir, sorry to wake you so early in the morning."

Mikisugi wiped each of his eyes with his hand, "Is this important? or can this wait till later?"

The agent spoke with a remorseful tone, "Its rather important I'm afraid sir, we got a ping from true Nui's collar, it seems that she's left the hotel."

Mikisugi breathed out an exhausted sigh, "Of course she did… Any idea where she's heading?"

The agent replied informatively, maintaining a professional tone, "Yes sir, while we don't have much audio from true Nui's collar, we did get some from one side of a conversation through clone Nui's bug suggesting they are going to try to help Ryūko."

Mikisugi sighed once again, like a father dealing with a troublesome child, "Damn it, true Nui really is a bad influence huh…"

The agent questioned, returning to the point of the call, "What should we do?"

Mikisugi answered, acting as the leader required of him, "Keep a watch on them for now, there may be a bit of confrontation but only have agents step in if things get out of hand since doing it early would probably make things worse, also keep a log of what the both of them are saying."

The agent replied with an affirmative tone, "Understood."

Mikisugi responded just having remembered something, "Oh by the way did you and the others monitoring Ryūko and Nui report to Iori for screening?"

The agent answered hesitantly somewhat taken aback by the implications of the question, "Uh y-yes sir."

Mikisugi replied lost in thought, "Good… Last thing we need is moles using this opportunity to their advantage, or worse triggering Nui's collar."

The agent responded continuing to seem troubled from the exchange, "yes sir… I'll keep you posted in case anything happens." The phone then hung up from the agent's end.

A look of concern displayed on Mikisugi's face as he put down his phone, his thoughts seemingly eating away at him, " *Damn threads… How many more friends are you gonna turn on me…?* "

Meanwhile true Nui arrived at Satsuki's house, floating down gently at the front. However she quickly leapt up again when she spotted Soroi walking past a window. Soroi looked out the window for a moment believing he noticed something, but quickly shooed the thought away.

Nui floated once more before landing at the back of the house, quickly seeing Ryūko sitting by one of the up stairs windows. Nui leapt up, grabbing into the brick with her nails and hooking onto the wall, waiting carefully for her opportunity.

Ryūko was sat on a bed directly in front of the window, her knees in front of her as she held onto them with her arms. Her eyes were surrounded with rings from lack of sleep while she bore an empty solemn stare.

Suddenly there was a small knock at the door, it was Mako who seemed to have opted to stay with Ryūko at Satsuki's.

Satsuki stood next to Mako quietly who looked on in concern while Mako frowned eking out a tentative tone, "Morning Ryūko… Did you get any sleep?"

Ryūko uttered a simple "No…" Her voice frayed and wrought with melancholy.

Mako continued, her face lost in worry, "Oh ok… Could I come inside?"

Again Ryūko uttered, "No…"

Mako spoke again, hopelessness audible in her quiet voice, "Oh alright… Well We're here if you need us OK?"

Ryūko wouldn't reply to this however, leaving Satsuki and Mako to walk away, Satsuki trying to comfort Mako, "Lets try again later OK?"

Ryūko sat in silence as the tears began to well in her eyes.

"Oh don't cry Ryūko!" Suddenly Mako appeared at her window wearing a white eyepatch on her right eye.

Ryūko turned to the window in shock, "M-Mako?! How did you- Wait what's with that eye patch?"

Mako began to panic a little to think of a reason, "Oh err I managed to get a real bad case of pink eye." Meanwhile Ryūko slowly grabbed the eye patch.

Ryūko grit her teeth angrily as soon as she saw Nui's purple insignia on Mako beneath the white eyepatch, she then shot a fast punch. Mako now revealed to be Nui took the punch head on collapsing from the window, falling casually to the ground bellow, spinning in the air as she fell. Strips of fabric appeared to pull off true Nui, each strip

baring the colours of her Mako disguise, revealing Nui in her true form.

Ryūko shouted down bellow at Nui from the window, "Stay the hell away from me Nui! You're the last person I wanna see right now! And don't disguise as Mako ever again or I'll kill you!"

True Nui sat up on the ground, dusting off her dress, while clone Nui appeared floating beside her in a translucent form looking at true Nui judgementally, "You didn't think that one through too much now did you?"

True Nui snapped back at her with irritation, "Look I'm a bit rusty at this alright?"

She then appeared once again by Ryūko's window, speaking to her with a sly tone, "But that is what I'm looking for… The Ryūko that I remember."

Ryūko crossed her arms as she looked at Nui with a berserk stare, "You don't know how to take a hint do ya?"

True Nui answered, a look of bravado in the face of Ryūko's mad glare, "Oh I do, I just don't really care, and besides I need some answers."

Ryūko snapped back angrily, "And why should I give you 'em?"

Nui sighed with frustration, "Come on Ryūko, humour me just a bit. Like for example… Why are you doing this? I thought you already had this song and dance and could move forward regardless."

Ryūko turned her head around to look back at the wall, refusing to answer.

Nui's frustration grew as she asked again, "Come on tell me! You're supposed to be strong! So why are you reverting back to some scared little girl? Was it the physical pain? Because I know a bit

about that and I'm fairly sure ripping your skin off to tear away at a uniform that's sewn into your flesh would be a bit more painful than losing your legs."

Ryūko uttered back, her voice quiet and her expression softening, "It's not that…"

Nui pressed on, unwavering in her prodding, "Then tell me what it is!"

Ryūko's pent up frustration released into a sigh as she began to explain, "Look, a while back I was… lonely, I would pick fights with kids at my schools, often getting myself kicked out, looking back on it I did it because I was frustrated that I felt rejected by my dad. So when you killed him and truly left me alone I at least had some sorta direction to move. So I went onward with my new reason for moving. But it took me a while to figure out that this way to go was just gonna screw me over, and that's when I realised that the people around me that cared about me were more important than some idea of revenge. So I fought for them, so I wouldn't lose them, and even still I had to lose someone I loved. But I felt… Ok this time, them telling me I could be who I wanted to be even without them, and… I felt free, to live my life surrounded by the people that cared about me, and made me feel… Safe."

Clone Nui floated beside true Nui, watching Ryūko talk, "Ryūko…" She uttered remorsefully.

Ryūko continued, the pain audible in her voice, "But then you showed up, and those servant assholes attacked, and everything I fought for feels like its slipping out of my fingers, and… it terrifies me… I just… don't want to wake up scared every day that I'm gonna lose everything I care about… But I don't expect you of all people to understand that…"

True Nui thought back to the fateful night atop the Honnōji academy tower, the memory filling Ryūko's words with an overwhelming feeling of familiarity, a truth Nui can't admit to herself "Hm you're right

I don't understand, why on earth would someone sit around hiding away from what they want to protect? If you want to live a certain way, you fight for that life! Get annoyed! Get pissed off! Jeez even the other Nui knows better than that… We all must struggle to exist, let alone live a life we're proud of, no matter many times we fall and let important things slip away. La vie est drôle after all."

Ryūko growled angrily, "What are you? My therapist? I already fought like hell to get this! Why should this fight never end huh?!" She then turned her head to face Nui, "And besides, what the hell would YOU know about any of that?!"

However Ryūko froze immediately upon turning, as her sight was met by an up close Nui staring at her with a piercing cold glare. Ryūko feeling like Nui was staring into her soul.

Nui spoke with a monotone voice, however coupled with her icy stare and frown, her voice left the impression of an indescribable turmoil behind every word, "Because it's what I told myself ever since I learned how to speak, because I wished nothing more than to prove that my existence was worthy of the purpose I was given. I would of burned the world down just to see Maman smile, and I almost did. I was elated when she told me to shed my physical body as it meant I finally lived up to what she expected from me. So when I woke up on that roof top, ran away like a coward then forced to live by you disgusting creatures, I knew it was my punishment, I would rather see my arms cut off and stepped on a thousand times than continue to live with this shame on my shoulders, to lash out at those I would had sided with in a desperate attempt to understand why my own kind has rejected me… Lady Ragyō is gone, all that ever mattered to me is gone, and I'm supposed to live despite that…"

Ryūko was taken aback, almost intimidated by the sudden outburst, "N-Nui?"

Nui blinked causing her look to return to her normal playful casualness, almost like she snapped out of a trance, "Oops sorry

about that, a bit of a crack in my lady-like manners, see what not much beauty sleep does to me? Tehe~"

Ryūko took a moment to take what just happened in before responding, her face a cocktail of confusion and melancholy, "Why are you doing this exactly? What do you gain from me returning to the fight?"

"Why you say? Well…" Nui pondered for a moment before continuing with a strangely genuine smile, "To be honest I found this whole emotional display of yours a bit… insulting."

Ryūko raised her eyebrows, blurting out a confused, almost offended, "Huh?"

Nui carried on, her voice layered with an underlying intention that Ryūko couldn't make out, "Well it wasn't the most unexpected thing in the world given how you acted a while back. But you are supposed to be Ryūko Matoi, the one and only that faced me head on in combat, butchered and humiliated me, then went on to defeat lady Ragyō! All while taking the dreams me and her worked so hard for and smashing them to pieces. To see you act like this after all that? Well that just makes me and lady Ragyō seem like we were weak, and I can't accept that."

Ryūko answered back wearily, the anger almost entirely dispelled from her voice, "Nui… You know I didn't do any of those things by myself right?"

Nui nodded, "Well that's true I suppose…" She then looked at Ryūko with a sharp look and a smug smile, "But tell me Ryūko dear, Are you by yourself?"

Ryūko looked down at the bed as her face began to fill with clarity, realising what Nui was saying, "No I… I guess I'm not, and you know you're right about one thing…" She looked up at Nui, a renewed determination in her eyes and smile, "I am pissed off!"

Butting heads

True Nui rushed forward, life fiber claws unveiled. With a wicked smile she threw several swipes at Ryūko, who blocked each with her own attacks using her life fiber severing blades. After the two traded attacks Nui grabbed each of Ryūko's blades, latching them in her claws. Both of them struggled against each other's strength, the blades quaking within Nui's grip. Ryūko appeared to be wearing her black and white skull jacket, white shirt red bow and black skirt, a vision of the past before she wore Senketsu.

Ryūko managed to pull her blades apart, out of Nui's grip. While Nui's arms were blown to each side, Ryūko fired off a kick, the blow connecting with Nui's chest and pushing her back. Ryūko then turned around and ran back while Nui gave chase, Ryūko running towards a large stone block about eight feet tall. Once Ryūko reached the perfectly smooth block, she leapt against it and kicked off, flipping backwards over the head of Nui who was almost directly behind her as she reached the block.

When Ryūko landed, she proceeded with her own rush towards Nui who hurried to turn around in time, the two trading blows once again with Ryūko now being the aggressor, whipping her blades at Nui like a furious berserker and Nui blocking each blow playfully, like a child playing with dolls.

Behind Ryūko appeared a doppelganger, placed on the ground while Nui was chasing her. As the doppelganger dashed towards Ryūko it bared one of it's life fiber claws like a spear leaning in and extending it's arm with it's body. Feeling the presence behind her, Ryūko hooked the real Nui's claws within the three blades of each Ryūko's weapons. Ryūko then leant to right as the attack came from the left, the doppelganger's claw flying by her by an inch.

Nui used this as her opportunity, violently whipping away her claws to free her hands, grabbing the arm of the doppelganger, and

swinging around the fake Nui like a mace at Ryūko. The blow sent Ryūko flying to the side, landing with a violent crash. Ryūko managed to keep a hold of her blades but as she recovered from the crash, she opened her eyes to see Nui holding her claws in an open hand, towards Ryūko's neck.

Nui smiled with casual glee, "I win!~"

Ryūko however grinned smugly, "Hm I wouldn't be so sure bitch." She then tapped the inside of Nui's leg with one of her blades as she held one up towards Nui's crotch.

Nui looked down at the blade curiously, "Oooooo how dirty of you Ryūko~ But are you sure you can do enough damage like that before I can remove your head?"

Ryūko glared threateningly, "How about we find out?"

Nui's smile widened, meeting Ryūko's threatening question with one of her own, "You sure you want me to answer that?"

Suddenly a loud voice echoed out to the two. It was Mikisugi's voice which seemed to have a mechanical reverberation suggesting it came from a speaker, "Alright that's enough you two, reset."

Nui stepped away from Ryūko while she brushed herself off. Ryūko then picked herself up, rubbed her chin with her wrist and checked her blades. The two was in the extremely large grey chamber split up into a grid with black lines. Within the chamber were many of the smooth grey blocks identical to the one Ryūko leapt off of, many of which seem to bare claw marks and missing pieces, suggesting a longer battle had occurred. These large grey blocks lowered back into the grid floor, returning the room to a completely flat empty chamber.

Ryūko sighed with frustration, "I guess we'll call that a draw…"

Nui replied, her voice layered with a judgemental harshness, "Then that's a failure for both of us."

Ryūko scoffed, "Tch, that's definitely something you would say."

Above them at the centre of the backmost wall was a rectangular window made of thick reinforced glass. On the other side of the glass was the laboratory, with Mikisugi standing before the window, watching Ryūko and Nui observantly.

The chamber shifted, the blocks extending out from the floor, this time instead of dotting around, the blocks formed a large pyramid-like tower with the peak at the centre of the chamber. Nui dragged her claws along each other playfully, causing sparks to fly off of them. Ryūko stretched her arms and her back before assuming her combat stance. A loud beeping sound played throughout the chamber, causing Ryūko and Nui to begin fighting once more, flipping around the arena, continuously trading blows and using what ever tactics they could to win.

Back in the laboratory, Satsuki stepped forwards towards the window to stand next to Mikisugi and join him in watching Nui and Ryūko.

After a moment watching, Satsuki spoke up, her tone cold but inquisitive, "Are you absolutely sure that them training by fighting each other is a good idea?"

Mikisugi raised his eyebrows turning his head to Satsuki, "I told you already, it wasn't my idea, it was theirs trust me, I almost couldn't believe my ears when they came in yesterday telling me they want to train by fighting each other, and besides, after what happened they need to do something to get back into the fight."

Satsuki shut her eyes, baring a solemn frown, "I'm aware… But them fighting each other could cause them to tap into their aggression from the past… They need to be able to work together against another threat."

Mikisugi sighed, looking back into the arena, "How are we supposed to do that…? No one other than the servants of the threads can lay a finger on these two… Well maybe Tsumugu could… But are you sure you're not apprehensive about this for a different reason?"

Satsuki looked down at the ground, replying sombrely, "What Ryūko said, it… hurt to hear… I remember a time when I believed the battle was over, I was ready to give up, ready to let go of the future, too attached to the past… but I managed to let go of the past, and live a new life free of that because the people I cared about made me realise there was a life ahead worth moving toards, but now that past… its returning, crawling upon us…"

Mikisugi questioned sympathetically, "You scared of that? The past coming back?"

Satsuki continued in response, her voice a cocktail of melancholy and sentimentality, "I'm afraid of losing what I've gained since that past, I'm afraid that if we begin to let it rule over our present we can't keep the new lives we fought so hard for and let go of the past to get even if we win the fight, it was foolish of me to not realise that Ryūko felt the same way…"

Mikisugi nodded, "Its tough to see how others are feeling when you're caught in your own turmoil, don't beat yourself up too much over it."

Satsuki's face turned from sombreness to stoic determination as she looked back up out at Nui and Ryūko, "But Nui is right, we can't just stop fighting despite that, or we really will be giving up this new life we fought for in the first place, I just don't know if this is the right way to do it. Fostering aggression amongst us to improve individually instead of a partnership to move forward."

The fighting in the arena let up once more with another tie as Ryūko and Nui came to a stand still, Nui held her claws against Ryūko's neck while Ryūko had her blades was against Nui's neck, the edge of Ryūko's blade drawing the slightest bit of blood from Nui.

Mikisugi chimed in again through the speaker, "Alright, round over."

Ryūko and Nui broke away from their positions against each other, Ryūko letting out a deep breath from the release in tension. Nui however wiped with quick flick a drop of the blood from her small wound and licked it off of her finger.

Ryūko sighed with exasperated frustration, "Yo Nui you feel like you're improving at all?"

True Nui replied with a smug arrogance, "Improve? Why on earth would I need to do that? I'm already perfect!~"

Meanwhile The ghostly translucent form of clone Nui hovered in the air, sewing up true Nui's wound, clone Nui being dressed in a purple skirt and jacket combo paired with a pink T-shirt and white trainers. She looked at true Nui with a awkward irritation.

Ryūko responded, prodding at Nui's confidence, "Is that why you got your ass kicked and was almost killed by the Reaper?"

True Nui answered as she pouted while her wound sealed up, clone Nui looking at her with mild irritation as her image disappeared, "Hm! I merely underestimated them, I won't make the same mistake again."

Ryūko scoffed at Nui's reply, "save your excuses, if that was true you would have some way to beat that trick of his."

Nui spread her arms open, presenting proudly, "Of course I do! I just won't get hit!"

Ryūko questioned, baring a fed up expression, "And what if you do get hit?"

Nui pondered for a moment before answering, "Well then… I pull out the threads like Rei did!"

Ryūko continued, digging further into Nui's logic, "From what I heard, Rei was only able to do that because the wound was small making it harder for the threads to dig inside, you may not be so lucky."

Nui smiled smugly, "I don't need luck, I'm too good for that."

Ryūko began to grow frustrated by Nui's persistent arrogance, "Oh yeah? Then I'm guessing it wasn't luck when I kicked you ass?"

Nui replied joyfully, her playful demeanour beginning to push Ryūko's buttons, "Of course! Who else besides lady Ragyō herself would I submit my dignity to than my beloved Ryūko?~"

Ryūko snapped back, her anger increasing by the second, "Like hell! Don't even try to pull some bullshit like that! I remember the stupid look on your face when you realised your arms were chopped off, freaking priceless."

Nui's face twisted into a psychotic smile as it seemed she too grew infuriated by this remark, "How about I cut out those eyes of yours so you never see my face again?"

Ryūko shot at Nui an enraged glare, "Try it bitch! I got my own way of never seeing your face again."

Watching over the exchange, Mikisugi wiped his eyebrows wearily, a look of exhausted frustration on his face as he spoke to Satsuki, "OK I'm starting to see your point." He then spoke into the mic connected to the arena's speakers, "Hey! That's enough you two, break it up!" He continued as Ryūko and Nui's attention was shifted to the window of the laboratory, "Lets just take a break to cool off."

Ryūko shot a glare towards Nui who casually waltz away towards the exit of the arena, with Ryūko soon making her way out of the chamber as well.

Mikisugi proceeded to turn away from the window, shooting a look at Satsuki, "You should probably head home, sticking around here ain't

gonna ease your worries, but if you need me I'll be in my office."

Mikisugi then walked away to leave the laboratory, while Satsuki continued staring down at Ryūko who proceeded to make her own way out of the testing chamber.

Ryūko made her way to a rec room. The walls of the rec room were coloured a light greyish blue with the back-most wall holding three dark leather sofas, the front-most right corner of the room holding a kitchen counter with a few cabinets and a kitchen sink. At the left most wall was an arcade machine, the top featuring a stylised blazing writing reading: "HELL FLAME SWAT" At the centre of the room was a foosball table with two nudist beach agents playing against each other at furious speeds.

Mako, dressed in her school uniform, sat on the right sofa, jumping up as soon as Ryūko entered the room. Mako gave her a hug which Ryūko reciprocated and the two proceeded to sit back down on the sofa. Mako pulled out a wrapped up bento box out of the chest area from her uniform shirt and handed it to Ryūko.

Ryūko smiled as she unwrapped the bento box, "Thanks Mako, brings back old times…" She took out a croquette from the bento, biting down on it quickly as her mouth filled with the taste of Mako's mother's somehow delicious cooking, "How was school?"

Mako answered as she pondered to herself, "Oh it was alright! Kinda boring without you guys there though, I tried to take some notes from today's lessons for you and not-scary-Nui but I fell asleep part way through each one…"

Ryūko sighed sombrely, "I'm sorry Mako… things are just a bit weird right now…"

Mako shook her head vigorously, "Oh don't worry about it! I'm just glad you're up and moving again! And besides you probably got things a lot more rough here, fighting with the scary Nui all day-"

Suddenly Mako froze up as through the glass swinging door of the rec room walked true Nui, as though Mako's words had summoned the devil herself. The nudist agents Jumped in their skin at Nui's arrival before quickly hurrying past her out of the rec room.

Ryūko glared at Nui who proceeded to walk across the rec room silently and sat down on the left most sofa, "Hey shit for brains, pretty sure Mikisugi meant for us to separate so we can cool down. And anyway why are you out and not clone Nui? I'm sure she's bored as hell of that room."

Nui sat up straight on the sofa with her legs crossed and her hands on one of her knees, stacked on top of each other, "I'll have you know I get quite bored of that room as well, and we're actually undergoing dimension fatigue right now, so you're stuck with me."

Mako uttered to Ryūko quietly, "Maybe we should go some where else…"

Ryūko growled with frustration, "Hell no, we were here first, she should piss off."

Nui spoke up casually, interrupting Ryūko's complaints, "You've gotten quite comfortable around me you know."

Ryūko replied in angry confusion, "How the hell do you figure that?"

Nui answered as she sat back into the sofa, sinking into the leather, "The fact you're allowing yourself to get angry around me. I thought you learned more self control than that."

Ryūko sighed as she crossed her arms and sat back in her seat, resting her head on the back of the sofa, her aggression seemingly somewhat simmering down, "Let's just say I'm out of practice when it comes to dealing with your bullshit." Ryūko turned her head, looking at Nui with a judgemental gaze, "Like saying you're perfect, when we both know how much of a failure you see yourself as."

Nui glared at Ryūko with a cold stare, her singular eye oozing with animosity, "You've got some nerve…"

Ryūko Shot back her own similarly cold glare, "Am I wrong?"

The scene went silent, Mako looking at the two of them with frenzied panic. she then shut her eyes building herself up and trying to suppress her anxiety in the situation.

"STOP IT BOTH Of YOU!" Suddenly Mako shouted breaking the silence, surprising Ryūko and irritating Nui, Mako continuing while as she jumped up from her seat, "We're not gonna get anywhere while you're always at each other's throats!"

Ryūko Sat up in her seat, "Mako, she's the bitch that killed my dad!"

Mako withdrew, her voice quieting down, "I-I know… But… wouldn't of you done the same thing if you were told to by a mom that meant everything to you, had no friends and slept in a windowless chamber everyday?"

Ryūko froze up, her mind shifted back to what Nui had said yesterday morning, followed by a memory of a pure white church, Ryūko standing in her pristine wedding gown before the central altar, scissor blade in hand, a feeling of familiarity she refused to accept.

Ryūko snapped out of the memory like awaking from a dream, "N-no! you can't expect me to get along with her, I'm sorry Mako, but you just can't…"

Nui suddenly cut in, putting on a joyful face, "Why not? Love and hate are two sides of the same coin after all!~"

Ryūko snapped, shouting back at Nui, "Shut the hell up!"

Mako turned her head towards Nui, welling up her confidence once again, almost to the point she seemed she was going to burst.

Nui Looked at Mako with mild irritation, "Ugh can you just get on with it?"

"Nui!" Mako suddenly shouted, "You're hurting a lot aren't you?!"

Nui gave an annoyed dismissive, "What?"

Mako immediately seemed intimidated, however she continued in a more timid tone, "W-well you are hurting… aren't you? Ryūko knows it at least…"

Ryūko started looking concerned at Mako, "Wait Mako what are you-"

Nui interrupted, her eye closed and she bore a smile that twitched with rage, "Oh does she?"

Mako tried to continue, her voice driven down to the squeak of a mouse, "Well with what you said to her yesterday…"

Nui smiled idly, however her hand revealed her true rage, squeezing the sofa to the point the threaded leather casing was about to pop, "You know bobble head, you're starting to get on my nerves…"

Ryūko shot up from her seat, "Wait what are you-"

"Can't you just admit that you and Ryūko felt the same way?!" This time Mako was the one to interrupt.

For once Nui seemed genuinely shocked, "W-what?"

Ryūko looked the same way, unable to respond.

"Ryūko lost her dad… because of you! And now you lost your Mom, your weird alien thread friends have rejected you! You feel alone, just like how Ryūko did." Mako shot Nui an angry stare, well as angry as Mako can look.

Ryūko and Nui were stunned, all of the Mako's words defying every expectation they had of what she could say, let alone what she would.

"M-Mako?" Was all Ryūko could utter in her shock.

Mako prepared for the worse, try to stand up straight and doing all she could to prevent herself from shaking.

However to both Ryūko's and Mako's surprise, Nui seemed to stand up calmly, a stoic frown on her face. she then walked towards the door to the rec room as Mako and Ryūko continued to stare at her.

Nui eventually stopped at the door, turning her head slightly to send an emotionless glare at Mako and Ryūko, "Ryūko get yourself ready for the next round of training."

Ryūko, dumbfounded, replied almost out of pure reaction, "Oh e-er yeah…"

Nui added on "Oh and bobble head?"

Mako jumped in her skin at the mention, "Y-yes?"

Despite Mako's panic, Nui continued with a calm monotone voice, "What I feel… Is none of your concern."

Nui then suddenly left the rec room, pulling on the door and causing a mighty slam, smashing the glass of the door, causing the remaining metal frame to fall off it's hinges and leaving cracks in the attached on walls.

Ryūko, still seemingly stunned at what had just occurred turned her head to Mako, "I'm sorry Mako… But what the hell?!"

Mako looked about panicking, trying to think of a response, "I er… well… I… I'm sorry Ryūko, I was just trying to help…"

Ryūko looked at mako wearily, "I get that… but this is Nui we're talking about, she's too dangerous."

Meanwhile true Nui walked down the many twisting corridors of the nudist beach HQ, spooking every agent walked past. She strode without her usual casual demeanour, her body baring the same focused stoicism she unveiled in the rec room, with her face continuing the monotone frowning expression. Clone Nui floated beside her, following true Nui as she walked. Clone Nui watched true Nui with an anxious stare, she recognised this behaviour from the original Nui's memories, a façade to hide her emotions, knowing that lashing out would only make things worse, she hadn't expected to see true Nui to act this way around anyone after the death of Ragyō.

Clone Nui tried to attentively speak up to the silent true Nui, "uh… N-Nui-"

"Not… One… More… Word." However true Nui broke her silence, quickly shutting down clone Nui from speaking any further, causing her to fade away baring a depressingly hopeless look on her face.

In a different section of the complex, Mikisugi was in a fairly conventional office. The walls were coloured the same greyish blue as other nudist beach rooms and the room featured all you would expect, a clock on right wall, a couple of metal filing cabinets, a decently sized book case etc.

He sat in front of a modest modern wooden desk, typing into a laptop baring the nudist beach insignia on the back of it's screen. Surrounding the laptop was various items you would expect from a desk, a steel pot containing a few pencils and pens, a small potted plant, a newton's cradle with silver beads and black string hung on a metal frame, a black telephone handset and a photo featuring Mikisugi, Tsumugu, Isshin Matoi, a young woman which was likely Kinue Kinagase; Tsumugu's sister, and one other individual, a man who's face was mostly concealed by the reflection of a nearby light. They all were posing for the photo in lab coats and were smiling, even Tsumugu which may be a surreally rare sight.

As Mikisugi typed he stared into screen of the laptop with a stoic expression. However this stare was broken as he sat back in his black office chair, sighing and scratching his head, pulling away from his laptop.

Suddenly there was a small knock at the entrance to the office, that being a dark oak door, this causing Mikisugi to call out to the other side of the door, "Yeah come in."

The door swung open slowly to reveal Shirō Iori at the door, once again wearing the same nudist beach gear lab coat combo, "Hey, not interrupting your work too much am I?"

Mikisugi closed his laptop as he replied, "Nah you're good, what's up?"

Iori stepped inside, casually breaking into an explanation, "Well I completed my analysis on the remains of what we believe to be the devices the servants used to generate those "thread portals" of theirs, as well as the machinery we discovered close to the origin points of the high velocity life fiber jammer which we believe was used to generate the jammer."

Mikisugi nodded as he clasped his hands together and laid his arms gently atop his laptop, with his elbows on his desk, "Nice, that was quicker than I was expecting, anything good?"

Iori closed his eyes as he sighed with disappointment, "I'm afraid it was so quick because of how little we have, the servant's capabilities for covering their tracks are still shining through, as it seems each of the devices seemed to have been exposed to some sort of corrosive substance, destroying the tools almost entirely with little residual left of the substance, perhaps they used life fibers for that as well. At any rate only a few tiny pieces are left of each, the same going for the jammer generators. Must of had a trigger in place for after usage to destroy the devices, preventing reverse engineering."

Mikisugi had his own disappointed sigh as he laid his head back, closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose, "Of course… Those bastards have thought of everything…"

Iori looked at Mikisugi with a stare mixed with curiosity and concern, "Are you alright Mikisugi? You seem more stressed out than usual."

Mikisugi raised his head, his expression changing to a weary smile, "Yeah I'm fine, just have a bit of a conundrum…"

Iori replied quickly, ready to lend his ear, "Well tell me about it, Perhaps I could give some input."

Mikisugi rested his head on his hand, propping it up with his elbow, a confuddled look on his face, "It's about Nui and Ryūko. Honestly I was excited when they told me they wanted to train together, But Satsuki pointed it out, that all it seems to be doing is causing them to increase their aggression for each other, while we need them to be able to work together."

Iori held his chin thoughtfully as he pondered his answer, "Hm… Well have you considered that you might be too limited in scope regarding their improvement?"

Mikisugi looked at Iori curiously, "What do you mean?"

Iori began to elaborate, "Well you seem to be focusing purely on a combat level, but what you failed to realise that combat is the only experience Ryūko and true Nui have with each other, and almost always as each other's opposition."

Mikisugi itched his chin, taking in Iori's supposition, "Then what do you suggest?"

Iori replied as he gestured with his right hand while his other hand was in his pocket, "This might sound strange, but how about…"

"Playing house." Seemingly a short while later Mikisugi stood in the large testing chamber arena before Nui and Ryūko, who looked confused from Mikisugi's sudden announcement.

Ryūko raised an eyebrow, "What?"

Mikisugi closed his eyes for a moment, taking in a deep breath, preparing himself like a soldier entering a battle, he then answered baring a stalwart gaze, "For the next few weeks, you two… will be living together. In between training sessions that is."

Cold as ice

Ryūko stared across at Mikisugi in the large grey chamber, her gaze filled with confused expectation, "Shitty joke Mikisugi."

However Mikisugi responded baring a cold serious glare, "I ain't Joking. For a few weeks you and Nui will be living together, and its gotta be at the hotel, easier to guard and with little interference."

The scene filled with a deafening silence as Ryūko's look turned to utter disbelief.

"No…" Ryūko broke the silence, uttering quietly, "No!" She raised her voice filling the rooms with the echoes of her voice, "HELL NO."

Mikisugi replied, trying to quell Ryūko's anger, "Ryūko-"

However Ryūko suddenly cut him off, "Don't you DARE try to justify this! I've tried my damn hardest just to accept this bitch still being around and now you of all people want me to live with her?! You were Isshin's friend weren't you?!"

Mikisugi closed his eyes, responding with a tinge of pain seeping through the professionality of his voice, "Its not that simple…"

Ryūko scoffed, an angry sarcastic laugh audible in her reply, "Of course it isn't… I thought you were playing nice with her so you could use her, but now… It seems like you actually think that this monster can be anything than what she is and has ALWAYS BEEN."

Mikisugi glared with a serious gaze, "We can't change who Nui Harime is, I don't think anyone but her can, but I do think we can get her understand what she is and what she has done perhaps then she could learn to change who she is, as I know how thin the line between us and becoming monsters really is." Mikisugi looked to the side, a painful glint in his eyes, "more than most…"

This caught clone Nui's attention as she read into the implications of these words while floating besides true Nui who watched over the proceedings with playful curiosity. At the same time, Tsumugu listened to the back and forth from the laboratory, looking down at Mikisugi with a look of recognition in his gaze.

Ryūko seemed to simmer down, turning her body as if to walk away, "Well I don't give a shit I'm not agreeing to this-"

"Do it Ryūko." A voice suddenly interrupted as Ryūko stopped in her tracks after turning to see Satsuki in her school uniform, having walked in from the side of the entrance during the back and forth.

"Wha-" Ryūko uttered in further disbelief.

Mikisugi however spoke in quiet surprise mixed with respectful recognition, "Satsuki…"

Satsuki's gaze however was fixed firmly on Ryūko, "Go along with this idea of theirs."

Ryūko's disbelief turned to with strained anger, as she desperately held herself back from lashing out at her sister with a simple but cold "Why?" spoken through gritted teeth.

Satsuki replied with a calm and soothing tone, "Because she is from our past." Satsuki then gestured to true Nui with a turn of her head, "And to move on from our past, we have to come to terms with it, but if we can't come to terms with her then how can we hope to do the same with our history. And for that, I need you to try to understand her."

Nui sighed disapprovingly, "Shouldn't be that difficult, after all when a lady changes her underwear she leaves the past behind, easy as that!"

Ryūko snapped back with irritation, "You must be out of yours then since all you seem to do now is hang on to the past!"

Nui retorted with taunting, playful, flirtiness, "oooo Ryūko~ enquiring about my undergarments? How forward of you~"

Ryūko scoffed with frustration glaring at Nui, She then turned her head to look back at Satsuki who stared back with a stern but empathetic gaze. The thoughts continuing to churn in Ryūko as she then looked back at Nui, a smug mocking smile lying beneath her purple Katakana Eyepatch.

Ryūko's face suddenly contorted as she shut her eyes and clenched her teeth, seemingly having come to a decision but was struggling to commit to it, "Damn it…" She uttered beneath her breath before raising her head and her voice along with it, "Fine… I'll do it, I'll… *Live* with Nui… But I swear if I end up killing her that's on you guys."

Mikisugi's face froze in quiet shock before changing to a wry appreciative smile, "Thank you… Ryūko."

Suddenly Nui butted in to the exchange with a pouty "Hmph!"

Mikisugi turned his attention to Nui, asking a question that seemed more like an order given his stern tone, "How about you Nui? You gonna play ball?"

Nui continued her pouty attitude as she casually pointed to the kill switch choker around her neck, "Its not not like I have much of a choice now does it?"

Mikisugi sighed with exasperation, "Can you just tell me if you're gonna cooperate with this…?"

Nui's pouting expression broke into an irritated glare as she snapped back turning towards Mikisugi, "I still don't get why you are asking *me* since its the other me Ryūko is gonna be spending most of her time with."

In response Mikisugi seemed somewhat apprehensive, as if he's aware of the turmoil what he's about to say is going to cause,

"Actually…" Nui's eye sparked up with curiosity as Mikisugi continued, "I'll need to apologise to clone Nui about this but… during the majority of the time during this experiment, I want true Nui to be the one in control."

"What?!" Suddenly a blood form of clone Nui appeared, seeping out and floating above true Nui.

Mikisugi explained consolingly, "I'm sorry Nui, but its important that true Nui has to interact with Ryūko."

Ryūko mumbled to herself regretfully, as she watched the exchange, "This is gonna suck…"

Meanwhile Mikisugi continued explaining, "And I also think true Nui needs to experience more of a life outside what she is used to, and she can't do that inside that little box room."

True Nui gave a sceptical dismissive "Hm."

Clone Nui however replied with a submissively defeated tone, "I guess that makes sense…"

Mikisugi lowered his eyebrows as he looked at the blood version of clone Nui sympathetically, "You gonna be ok Nui…?"

Clone Nui's head jumped up as she tried to quell Mikisugi's worries, "Oh yeah! I'll be ok, true Nui spends most of her time in that room, so I guess its only fair that I take a step in her shoes, or well, my shoes… you know what I mean…"

Mikisugi smiled warmly at clone Nui, "Thank you, I'll be sure to get you all of the ramen you want after this." After him saying this, clone Nui's blood form quickly seeped back into true Nui.

True Nui cut in however, lost in her own fantasization, "Well now I'm interested… This should be fun~ Alright Mikisugi I'll play along with this little experiment of yours."

Ryūko sighed with disgust, "Ugh… does no one see how messed up this is…" This causing Satsuki to place her hand on Ryūko's shoulder.

Mikisugi replied to Ryūko with a calming sympathetic voice, "Trust me we do Ryūko, but its for the best, trust me. And besides we'll be keeping a close eye on the both of you so you don't gotta worry about her doing some funny stuff."

Satsuki snapped back sternly in Ryūko's stead, "You better, if anything happens during this experiment, I'll be holding you personally to my wrath." She turned her head to Ryūko, her voice softening to comfort her sister, "I'll have Soroi gather the things you brought over."

Ryūko glanced away from her sister's embrace to shoot a sharp look at Nui, however this time instead of walking away, Nui looked back at Ryūko curiously, before closing her eye and smiling brightly.

Ryūko turned away in anger, before walking away, leaving Satsuki's side. Satsuki's gaze followed Ryūko's back until she turned her head to look at Nui, Satsuki's eyes filled with a cold stare, she then walked onward to follow her sister out of the chamber.

Nui Shrugged as she waited for moment before eventually moving in the same direction as Ryūko and Satsuki towards the exit of the chamber.

"Nui." Suddenly Mikisugi spoke up interrupting Nui's walk, she seemed to listen without turning as Mikisugi continued, "This ain't an opportunity for you to screw around, its a chance for something so much more, don't waste it."

Nui however refused to reply as she still refrained from turning and merely continued to walk out from the chamber.

Satsuki and Ryūko were waiting in a black car outside the HQ. Ryūko was on the right side staring out the window propping her

elbow at the bottom of the car window and holding up her head with her hand, Satsuki sat in the middle calmly with her eyes shut and arms crossed.

A nudist agent stood by the vehicle opening the back left car door as Nui approached. Ryūko scoffing as Nui sat down.

Nui looked about in calm joy before suddenly snuggling up to Satsuki with a sultry look on her face, "Been waiting for my chance to do this for a while~ What about you lady Satsuki?"

Ryūko turned her head away from the window to shoot a furious look at Nui, Satsuki however responded to Nui calmly let coldly, "Cease at once Nui or I'll skin every portion of the flesh you have touched me with."

Nui pulled away from Satsuki with her usual playfulness, "Ah… As feisty as usual, I've always loved that about you Satsuki."

Not longer after this exchange the agent outside stepped into the drivers seat of the car. The vehicle Whirred into life and made it's way from nudist beach HQ. The first stop of course was at Satsuki's house, Soroi stepping outside to meet their arrival, placing a large wheeled suit case in the trunk of the vehicle, shining a sympathetic smile to Ryūko through the car window.

"This must be… hard for you, lady Satsuki." He spoke to Satsuki a ways away from the vehicle.

Satsuki stood with her arms crossed and a stern but pained frown along with her eyes being cast towards the ground, "I can't shake the feeling that I may be making a mistake…"

Soroi placed a hand on Satsuki's shoulder which seemed to somewhat relieve the tension in Satsuki's face, "Such is the case for all difficult decisions, but fail or not, I know that you will be able to make the best out it no matter what, that is the strength I've always seen in you Satsuki." Soroi removed his hand from Satsuki's

shoulder, smiling wryly, "I'll make you some Tea when you get home."

Satsuki replied with a calm soft, "Thank you Soroi…" And the two embraced before Satsuki returned to the black car.

The car pulled away once more, this time away from Satsuki's house. A short journey lying between them and their destination. And after a few minutes they soon arrived at the hotel.

Ryūko stepped out of her side of the vehicle first moving towards the back of the car to remove her suit case from the trunk before returning to by the car door, looking up at the multi-storey hotel in dread of the things to come. Satsuki got out from the same side, placing a hand on Ryūko's back, causing Ryūko to look back at her sister with a wry smile.

This moment was interrupted as Nui got out from her side of the car, Stretching her legs and arms, spewing out purposely questionable moans, "Oh my~ felt like we've been driving for daaaaaaays…" She turned towards the two sisters, "You coming Ryūko?"

Ryūko Sighed with exasperation in response, "Yeah yeah just go ahead, I need a minute."

Nui gave a casual "Oki doki!" As she proceeded to walk towards the entrance of the hotel. Suddenly however she leapt faster than the eye can see behind one of the other vehicles parked beside the black nudist beach car, attempting to carefully spy on the other two's conversation.

Satsuki spoke sombrely a tone of concern oozing through her voice, "I'm sorry about this Ryūko… I know this is gonna be hard for you."

Ryūko shook her head, a soothing look of confidence on her face, "Nah don't worry about it, I can deal with this no problem, only thing I'm worried about is taking a few years off your life from the stress."

Satsuki gave a slight chuckle in her reply, "I feel like I'm gonna drink my own body weights worth in tea by the end of these weeks, I should get a gift for Soroi as thanks."

The two shared their own hug before separating, Ryūko making her way towards the hotel entrance wheeling her suit case as she went, while Satsuki stepped back into the car, which not before long pulled away from the hotel.

Ryūko was quickly joined by Nui in walking into the hotel, provoking an irritated yet unsurprised reaction from Ryūko, "Hm so much for going ahead, you enjoy the show?"

Nui answered as she pushed through the hotel's revolving door, "Of course I wouldn't miss it for the world! Now… To the hotel room!" As she stepped into the hotel lobby she posed dramatically, one hand on her hip while she pointed with the other down the centre of the room. The agents witnessing her were left with second hand embarrassment, Ryūko included.

The two were then screened quickly by the agents, Ryūko being provided a key to the hotel room and a locational tracker featuring a panic button. Nui however was fully scanned down using a metal detector as well as her biometrics being taken.

Once the scans were complete, the two were allowed through, entering an elevator by the stair case, Ryūko forcibly grabbing Nui's hand to prevent her from pressing every button on the elevator's control panel.

After a few awkward moments of waiting, the elevator dinged on their floor, the two quickly making their way to the hotel room, Ryūko opening the door and Nui closing it behind her. And then they were there. The hotel room. And the beginning of this experiment.

The stood side by side, Nui on the side closest to the bed. The scene was silent for a moment, Ryūko almost lost in pondering the

circumstances that has lead to this moment, Nui however appeared to be soaking it in with casual joy.

Nui suddenly ran across the room and leapt onto the bed, with her arms spread out and face towards the celling, sighing with ecstasy. Ryūko however quietly made her way towards the sofa, placing her suit case at the right most end of the sofa.

Nui bounced on her back to land sitting on the edge of the bed to sit up and look at Ryūko, "So Ryūko what do you wanna do first? Kissing practice? Although from what I remember you might not need much practice~"

Ryūko scoffed, "fuck that I'm just gonna go to sleep."

Nui's face glowed as she realised the opportunity, "Ooooo how about you share my bed? Its got plenty of room~"

Ryūko snapped back, her irritation already beginning to grow, "You don't have any concept of boundaries at all do you?"

Nui however seemed somewhat confused in her response, "What do you mean? You've slept in the same bed as other girls haven't you?"

Ryūko explained with the frustration of a teacher instructing a clueless student, "That's because I could trust those people Nui…"

Nui replied almost offended, "You can trust me though Ryūko! I'm a very sound sleeper, I haven't snored once in my life!"

Ryūko sighed as it somewhat seemed that the energy drained from her face from the interaction, "That's… not what I meant, look I'll just sleep on the sofa so please do me one single favour and try to hold back your urges to mess with me."

Nui seemed somewhat befuddled but acquiesced reluctantly, "Hm alright more bed for me I suppose." She then stood up, suddenly being surrounded by life fibers.

After the life fibers dissipated from surrounding Nui, she stood in the same spot, arms spread open and her body completely stark nude.

Ryūko, red faced, immediately turned away, "Wh-what the hell Nui?!"

Nui replied cluelessly, "What?"

Ryūko turned back gesturing downwards at Nui's slender form, her face becoming even more red, "Y-you're Nude!"

Nui shrugged casually, "well of course I am, I sleep nude, don't you?"

"No!" Ryūko snapped back, "Well sometimes… but mostly no, can't you just wear something? While I'm around I mean."

Nui pondered for a moment in consideration of this notion, "Hm, I guess I don't really have a reason to sleep nude anymore…"

Ryūko's blush dissipated somewhat as she seemed taken aback by this answer, "Wait what do you mean "Anymore?"

Nui replied suddenly remembering Ryūko's unawareness of her personal circumstances, "Oh well lady Ragyō had me sleep nude in case she wanted to conduct some late night… purification, although she did at times request special outfits for me to wear, of course I would sew 'em myself and she was always pleased with the results~"

All the colour disappeared from Ryūko's face as a surge of disgust crawled up her throat, "Wait… how young were you when that…" Her face then shifted as if she snapped out of a trance, "forget it, I don't wanna know, just put something on. Right now."

Nui nodded casually, "Oki doki!" Nui was surrounded by threads once again.

This time when the life fibers dissipated, Nui appeared standing in pink frilly lingerie, including thigh high's and a garter belt.

Nui presented proudly, "Pretty good don't you think? Sewed it up based on the REVOCS sexy fun times collection! Ok it wasn't actually called that but I always thought that should be it's name."

Ryūko blushed once again, although not nearly to the extent as before, this time keeping her composure, "Better than nothing I guess, you sewed this in that pocket room of yours?"

Nui nodded joyfully, "Mhm! Got those Nude monkeys to give me all the fabric that I could want! Need it to pass the time, otherwise I would die of boredom."

Ryūko chuckled slightly in unimpressed sarcasm, "Hm wouldn't that be a shame… I wonder how you swindled them into giving that the ok."

Clone Nui appeared in a form made of blood, seeping out and floating from true Nui's arm, "She told them that if they didn't give her all the fabric she could want she would make sure to become even more annoying than she already is…"

Ryūko's mouth curved into an almost bemused smile as the blood form of clone Nui disappeared back into true Nui's arm, "Hm that sounds about right." Ryūko then turned away towards her suit case to remove her pair of folded yellow rabbit polka dot pyjamas.

True Nui asked simply as she checked the puffiness of her pillows, "You gonna get dressed?"

Ryūko responded as her face quickly shifted back to the cold and angered demeanour she usually wields when around true Nui, "Not with you in the room."

Nui sighed with her usual layered smile, as she made her way out of the room, "Ah Ryūko… Ever the coy."

Ryūko didn't reply, simply waiting for the closing of the room's door to signify Nui's exit, before stripping down to get in her PJs. Nui of

course trying to peak through the crack in the hotel door. Ryūko deciding to throw a kitchen knife into the door, the blade of the knife narrowly avoiding Nui's face. Nui barely reacted merely standing up from the door and poking the knife curiously causing the knife to wobble in it's cut open slot.

Nui stepped back inside the hotel room, looking over her shoulder at the knife handle, "I wonder if the nudists are willing to fix that for us."

Ryūko was now lying on the sofa unresponsive with her head turned away.

Nui leapt onto the bed, sitting up as she closed the duvet over her bottom half, "Nighty night Ryūko!" Of course Ryūko didn't reply, causing Nui to collapse onto her back sinking into the bed.

Ryūko waited for Nui to fall quiet, including the rustling of her bed sheets before closing her eyes and drifting into sleep.

In the pocket room, clone Nui observed the interactions between the two, watching true Nui slink into clone Nui's own bed, a whine of worry oozing from her mouth. Once the hotel room fell completely silent as clone Nui was sure both true Nui and Ryūko was definitely asleep, she then made her own preparations to head to bed atop the clinical pure white bed of the pocket room, changing into her pink pyjamas and settling on the strangely comfortable yet awkwardly unfamiliar bed.

However just as she was ready to lie down and call it for the night, a ghostly figure seemed to materialise at the centre of the room, quickly grabbing clone Nui's attention. The ghostly figure, with a height beneath clone Nui's knees, began to obtain a more physical appearance, it's translucent figure manifesting clothing and flesh, filling in the ghost. The figure revealed itself to be a tiny child, baring the same appearance of the child version of the original Nui seen within Nui's memories.

The child toiled about sitting on the floor of the room, putting down a textile to play with a pair of dolls as she sighed melancholically, "When is she coming home…?"

As soon as clone Nui heard the child mumble this, an idea hit her as she decided to quickly observe true Nui lying in her bed. Clone Nui's suspicions were confirmed with true Nui appearing to mutter these same words in her sleep.

Clone Nui's attention was drawn back to now apparent dream as suddenly the doors to the room appeared to open, letting in a bright rainbow light in the shape of the door, that spread across the room. In the middle of the door way however was a silhouette, obscured within the shadow it cast within the light. The silhouette of course resembled Ragyō, standing quietly at the door.

The child Nui's eyes shone with Joy as she stood up to meet Ragyō's arrival, "Maman you're home!"

"Where is my flower that never wilts?" The silhouette spoke, it's tone resembling Ragyō's voice, however it seemed to be heavily distorted, it speech carried an unwavering malice.

The strangeness of the voice and the callousness of it's words quickly wiped the joy from the child's face as she spoke again now with fearful hesitation, "M-maman?"

The voice spoke again, barely recognising the petrified pleas of the little girl, "It cannot be here, for all in this bed has withered, their once vibrant petals carried away by the biting winds of winter."

The child Nui called out in her desperation, seeking any sort of recognition for the strange form resembling Ragyō, "Maman please!-"

"Your mother is not here child." The voice quickly cut her off, sending chills down the little girl's spine, "At least not the one you call out to, and besides what use would she have for you? Your colours are all

faded, your stem hangs low, and your leaves have all shrivelled up, you gave yourself to such a fate, when you reached for the sun but were too weak to withstand it's rays."

Child Nui shook where she stood, doing all she could to prevent herself from falling onto her knees, "I-I…"

Clone Nui observed the child with a pained look in her eyes, wanting to stand up to embrace the little girl but was too afraid to move from where she sat.

"But you know what we do with such withered flowers?" The voice spoke once again, followed by echoing footsteps, "We pull them out… By the roots." As soon as it said this the silhouette resembling Ragyō stepped into the room it's form no longer obscured by shadow.

The figure still resembled Ragyō and appeared to be "nude" However instead of flesh it appeared to have an amorphous dark substance for skin with red life fiber-esque lines running across. It seemed to have no mouth on it's face but instead a large chasm for a mouth running vertically along it's chest from between it's breasts to between it's legs with the mouth opening into a gaping maw of red and yellow. What little on it's face was two glowing red and yellow life fiber eyes, shining with an unmatched ferocity.

Clone Nui gasped in terror while the child Nui screamed as a flood of tears streamed from her eyes.

Back in reality, true Nui appeared to be screaming as well as she thrashed around in her sleep. Her screaming of course waking up Ryūko who seemed ready to grab her weapons until looking over the back of the sofa to see Nui still asleep.

Ryūko got up from the sofa observing Nui continuing to writhe as she murmured seemingly in a panic with a genuinely distressed look on Nui's face, a strange sight for Ryūko who has never seen this level of vulnerability from Nui, at least in this form.

Ryūko stood at the edge of Nui's bed, reaching over to touch Nui's arm. Her touch seemingly comforting Nui who calmed somewhat, further surprising Ryūko. She then touched Nui's wrist with her middle and index finger, almost as if she was checking for a pulse.

However Ryūko's real intentions quickly became clear as she murmured to herself, "Still cold as ice…"

She then lied back on the sofa, closing her eyes once more and for the last time settling into the calm chill embrace of sleep.

Hateful reflection

Ryūko Awoke early in the morning meeting the sight of what appeared to be a pile of pink clothing peaking just above the back of the sofa, the sight quickly alarming her as she pushed off the sofa to sit up and observe her surroundings.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the apartment around her was filled with clothes of different types and various shades of pink and purple along with a mix of both. There was dresses, bikinis and everything in between when it comes to feminine clothing.

Ryūko looked over the back of the sofa and aforementioned pile of clothes like she was a soldier peering over cover amidst a battlefield. Of course the rest of the room was covered with the various clothing as well, with sitting at the foot of her bed was true Nui, who was already in the middle of severing the end of a pink thread with her nail from another finished dress.

"Er Nui…? What the fuck?" Ryūko raised her head higher upon seeing Nui, looking at her with a confused gaze.

Nui pulled her head away from her work to look at the newly arisen Ryūko, "Oh you're awake! Morning Ryūko! You're quite adorable while you sleep you know~"

Ryūko's face immediately shifted to her angered irritation, "You're asking for a broken jaw, but first off, what the fell is all of this?"

Nui answered with a proud joyful tone as she picked up one of her dresses and spreading it out between her two hands and presenting it across her chest, "Oh these? You like them? Used a fair bit of fabric but I managed to sew 'em all this morning!"

Ryūko seemed somewhat taken aback in her befuddlement, "Ok… but why?"

Nui answered cluelessly to Ryūko's confusion, "For you to try on of course!"

"Not happening." Ryūko's befuddlement quickly turned to stern rejection.

Nui's voice quickly shifted to the pleading of childlike entitlement, "Oh come on pleeeeeeeease, you'll look absolutely gorgeous!"

Ryūko snapped back in frustration, "Forget it! I ain't wearing any of the crap you sew! Besides I don't wear purple and pink shit."

Nui reacted by seemingly coming to an epiphany, "Oh yeah! Black and red should do right? I'll get the nudists to send me those colours as soon as I can!"

"Are you even listening?!" Ryūko's voice built up alongside her irritation, "I said I'm not. Gonna. Wear. Your. Stupid. Freaking. DRESSES!"

Returning to the nudist beach HQ, Rei Hōōmaru in her light blue and white suit, skirt and thigh high boots, sat on a standard office chair within what appeared to be a doctor's office in the Nudist beach's medical ward. Her injured arm from the battle with the Reaper being held in a white cast.

Before her sat a male doctor wearing a white lab coat over nudist beach gear. The man was bald but had a large grey moustache that he seemed to consistently run his fingers through during his contemplations. In front of the doctor was monitor displaying X ray scans of presumably Rei's damaged hand.

The doctor began to explain to Rei as he continued to stare into the scans, gesturing with one of his hands towards sections of the screen while his other hand carried on fiddling with his moustache, "While the surgery was resounding success, we can't guarantee you won't experience any withstanding pain, I recommend avoiding

putting pressure on that arm for the time being, lest you aggravate the injury."

The doctor looked at Rei, seemingly expecting a response. However he was met with Rei's silent stoicism.

He turned back to the monitor, typing into a keyboard, "I'm going to prescribe you some Tylenol, take two of these per day and call in if the pain in your arm doesn't go away. For now head home, relax your arm and we'll have another appointment in a few weeks to see how you're getting on."

A few seconds later and slip of paper churned out of a modest sized printer on the left hand side of the monitor. The doctor took out the slip and handed it to Rei, who accepted the slip without a word, her eyes filled with an unwavering determination behind her azure lensed shades.

Rei made her way out of the medical ward and exited the nudist beach HQ building. She was bathed in sunlight from the warm summer day as soon as she stepped out from the lobby doors. Various individuals in business suits and nudist beach uniforms walked past her in and out through the main doors.

She immediately pulled her phone from her jacket pocket, quickly selecting a number before placing the phone against her right ear, "Lady Satsuki?"

Satsuki's voice replied with casual friendliness, "Ah Rei, how did your appointment go?"

Rei replied, her usual cold demeanour softening somewhat, "It went alright, however the doctor said there should be just some lasting pain."

Satsuki mumbled as she contemplated future complications, "Hm I see… Well you are free to take as much paid leave as you require."

Rei answered quickly, a tinge of sternness now resonating through her voice, "That won't be necessary."

Satsuki's tone began to ooze with concern, "Rei are you sure about that? It won't be an issue, really, its best that you take as much time for your arm to heal as possible."

Rei closed her eyes calmly as she attempted to assuage Satsuki's worries, "I'm sure, trust me I'll be alright, never mind that for now…" Rei opened her eyes as she watched a pair of butterflies fly around each over above a patch of grass running along the entrance of the HQ, "How is the experiment going with Ryūko and Nui? Has one of them ripped the other's head off yet?"

Satsuki chuckled slightly, "Not yet, although I can imagine the temptation for Ryūko is strong."

Rei's posture relaxed as she replied, "It's an interesting ploy putting them two together, Nui's emotions must be an ocean of ecstasy and rage, practically one in the same for her."

Satsuki responded with an air of curiosity, "You seem to understand her quite well, but to me it never seemed like you and her were close."

Rei answered, her voice bearing a subtle level of melancholy, "We weren't close, I was trash to her just like any other human and she would even threaten to kill me at times, only not going through with it since I was required still by lady Ragyō. But I was around before Nui was born and I watched her grow up into who she became, so its fair to say I know some of what makes her tick."

Satsuki detected Rei's solemnness, matching it with her own, "I see…"

Rei's mouth curled into a sombre smile, "Its not like she didn't surprise me at all however even when she was a child, like the time when her handler was off sick, with lady Ragyō assigning me to

temporarily watch over her, Nui still small enough to be beneath my knees was terrified, by that time she didn't trust anyone but Ragyō to the point she would hide anytime anyone entered the room, didn't help that the handler that usually "watched" over her was not very… *tactful* in his methods. But even still, one night she asked me to read her a bed time story… It was an action that threw me for a loop given I made myself not see Nui as a child so much as an… asset, although moments like those tended to slip through the cracks in that outlook, I suppose she must of been desperate for any affection to come to me of all people…"

Satsuki was pierced by a sudden reflective dejection, however she tried to keep her voice calm and empathetic to bury her emotions, "I'm… Sorry Rei."

Rei replied seeing through the façade and tried to soothe Satsuki's distress, "Its alright, I actually feel in higher spirits after speaking to you, so thank you lady Satsuki."

Satsuki bared her own smile, only hers was of calm appreciation, "My pleasure Rei. Will you be coming home now?"

Rei responded quickly, "Oh well no, I actually have somewhere I need to go first, shouldn't take too long though."

Satsuki was somewhat surprised but understanding, "Oh I see, well take all the time you need, just please don't strain your arm too much."

"Thank you lady Satsuki, I'll see you later" Rei Hung up the phone, her face quickly returning to cold seriousness, as she began to journey away from the HQ.

She began Walking through the busy streets of Tokyo, her eyes drifting over many random faces in the crowds; students heading to school, business men and women going to work, tourists purveying the vistas of the city. It was a whirlwind of liveliness, however Rei cared not, for she had a destination fixed in her mind. She eventually

stopped at a rather modest sized gym, the exterior being a large glass window on the left side of a pair of glass double sliding doors beneath a large silvery sign featuring the title "Tokyo super gym." Within the large window, a multitude of individuals wearing gym clothing operated several types of exercise equipment in a decently sized light grey walled room, these equipment ranging from running machines, cycling machines, pull up frames, rowing machines to of course dumbbell sets and weight benches.

Rei entered through the sliding glass double doors reaching a small reception area, flashing her membership card to the receptionist, before entering through a pair of grey swinging double doors with circular windows situated at eye level, the doors leading to the exercise area. Rei quickly gained the attention of the several men and women exercising due to the rarity of seeing someone enter a gym in a clean cut suit. Rei ignored this however as she made her way to the weight bar.

She immediately attached a pair of 15 kilogram weights on both sides of the bar before lying down on the bench. A few moments passed by with Rei bench pressing 20 times before standing back up.

She uttered beneath her breath to herself as she now attached a pair of 20 kilograms onto the weight bar, "Not enough…"

She lied back down and began doing bench presses again, the sight began gathering spectators around her, muttering amongst each other impressed by Rei's feat with consistent mentions of the cast on Rei's arm.

Rei stood back up to add another pair of 20 kilogram weights onto the bar.

One of the spectators, a fairly muscly bald man man in a blue vest and shorts tried to interrupt, a sweat dripping down his forehead, "Woah there lady, you're gonna hurt yourself doing that."

Rei of course ignored him, simply muttering to herself again, "Not… Enough…"

She lied back down and carried out more bench presses. Her movements slowing with each one as a surge of pain flashed through her injured arm. She continued however gritting her teeth through the pain, her mind filled with the image of true Nui sprawled out on the ground convulsing while the Reaper's threads ravaged inside her. This image being followed by the vision of Ryūko, a puddle of blood gathering in front of the bloody stumps of where her legs used to be.

"Not enough." Her voice began to rise as she forced the weight bar above her through staggered breaths, a final image of the child version of Nui seemingly crouched down before something on the ground in the pouring rain.

"I'm not enough… !" She finally shouted out as she completed one more bench press before suddenly throwing the weight onto the ground beside her, the falling of the bar narrowly being avoided by the nearby spectators.

Rei sat up turning her body to the side as she held her face in anguish. Her breathes were heavy and rugged while she stared at the ground, another surge of pain shooting through her arm. Members of staff of the gym quickly made their way into the room at the sign of the commotion, however Rei merely pushed pass them, quickly making her way out of the gym and back to the streets outside.

A single thought filled Rei's mind, as she wandered down the street, her serious expression attracting the curiosity and concern of many passer-by's, " *I won't let things continue this way…* "

Going back to the hotel room, Ryūko sat arms crossed with a fed up expression on her face on the right hand side of the sofa. While Nui, she was sitting on the left hand side, her face a cocktail of

annoyance, anger and even a hint of sadness, as she fiddled with a needle in a small pink textile.

All across the room was the dresses sprawled out across the floor and across the various furnishings, only now the dresses where torn apart with small pieces of the dresses spread all around the room.

The two sat silently, a hint of tension hanging in the air.

Nui broke the silence with a pouty huff, "That wasn't really necessary you know…"

Ryūko snapped back, quickly raising her voice, "That wasn't necessary?! How about filling the room with shit and trying to get me to wear your crappy dresses immediately when I wake up!? How's that for necessary?!"

True Nui strangely enough seemed somewhat taken aback as she appeared genuinely offended, "My dresses aren't crappy! I put my heart and soul into every one of my dresses!"

Blood seeped out of true Nui's arm and formed clone Nui, "Hey… How about you both take a moment and calm down…"

Both true Nui and Ryūko quickly turned to the blood version of clone Nui, snapping at her furiously, "Stay out of this." Clone Nui slinking back anxiously before the blood seeped back into true Nui's arm.

Ryūko turned her head, returning to fighting with true Nui, "Hard to put in something you don't have, The only thing you put passion into is killing! With a grand couturier like you, it makes me wonder why REVOCS didn't go out of business years back!"

The fury burned in Nui's eye as she bared her razor sharp teeth if a furious grimace, "You take that back!"

Ryūko snapped back, the tension in the scene climbing, "Make me!"

The room went quiet as the two gazes met, clone Nui observing the two in a panic over a possible fight breaking out.

Despite this however true Nui simply turned away, shifting her gaze back to her textile as she continued to lazily fiddle about with her needle.

Ryūko continued looking at Nui for a moment before turning to face forward with crossed arms, vocalising a simple judgemental "Hm."

The quiet returned. The only audible noises within the room being the quiet sounds of Nui's fiddling.

The frustration built up in Ryūko's face before she suddenly turned back towards Nui, "Can you just answer a question? And without your usual bullshit."

Nui pouted but seemed to acquiesce, "… What question?"

Ryūko answered with a subtle tone of pain emanating through her voice, "What did you feel when you… When you killed my dad?"

Nui stared blankly for a second to take in the question. She then turned her head to the side to ponder over her answer, "Hmm… Honestly? Not much really, almost nothing."

Ryūko was taken aback, "Really? No enjoyment or anything at all?"

Nui replied almost casually, "Well he was good at fighting so I wasn't exactly bored, and it was rather frustrating when he cut out my eye, but in the killing itself? No I didn't really feel anything."

"W-why?" Ryūko uttered back, her voice quiet and shocked.

Nui responded quickly, "Well because it was just a mission to me, he was just another human, standing in mine and lady Ragyō's way, did you expect me to be super happy over having killed him or something?"

Ryūko answered in calm frustration, "Well you always seemed so joyful when you told me that you murdered him."

Nui replied with a sigh as if the answer was obvious, "Well of course I did! I wanted to toy with your emotions, someone like you is an open book after all so it was easy to tell how to infuriate you."

Ryūko grumbled in reluctant acceptance, "I… I guess that makes sense."

Nui replied with a simple "Of course it does!"

The scene quickly became quiet once again, Ryūko crossing her arms once again as she stared at the floor, baring a furrowed brow and became lost in thought.

Nui however cut through the silence this time, "What about you?"

Ryūko snapped back in confusion, "What?"

Nui answered the question with her own, her tone was straight to the point, "How did you feel? When you killed lady Ragyō."

Ryūko was taken aback once again, this time in hesitation to answer, the topic poking at her emotions, "H-huh…?"

Nui continued her face beginning to draw close to Ryūko's, "I don't expect you to regret it, but to you she was more than just an enemy, did you feel relief perhaps? Or maybe melancholy…"

Ryūko remained hesitant, a solemn befuddled expression crawling onto her face, "Nui…"

Nui leaned in however, her face almost touching Ryūko's as Nui shot a gaze of increasing intensity into one of Ryūko's eyes, "Tell me, I answered your question so you should answer mine…" Her voice's intensity began to match her gaze, "Tell me."

"I didn't kill her!" The tension in Ryūko's face exploded like a geyser.

However it was Ryūko's words that shocked Nui the most, "W-wha-?!"

Ryūko cut her off as she repeated herself to settle the tension in the air, "I didn't kill her…"

Nui's shock melted into confusion, "Wait… But then how did she die?"

Ryūko answered with a troubled sigh, "I… After I defeated her and shredded Shinra-Kōketsu, there was a moment where we floated above the atmosphere of the planet. There I asked her to just… come home with me, to put everything behind us. Instead, she ripped out her heart and crushed it between her fingers, before dissolving into the darkness of space."

Nui's face dropped into dejection, "I see… That… sounds like something she would do…" She her raised her face, another curiosity sparking within her eye, "But why would you offer her that? Did you forget that she ordered me to kill your father?"

Ryūko spoke through clenched teeth, reluctant to provide her justification, "I was… I was just tired of the fighting, tired of all the bullshit strife and grudges… I just wanted to move on… and despite everything that happened, she was still my Mom."

Nui stared back at Ryūko for a moment, lost in silent confusion, before suddenly turning to face forward and fiddle with her textile, replying with a pouty spiteful tone, "Hm, makes me wonder if you would of offered me the same opportunity if I was in such a position."

Ryūko took her turn to face forward as she responded, cold melancholy permeating through tired sighs, "I… I don't know… Would you had accepted the offer if I did?"

Nui refused to answer, foretelling the return of the silence.

As a few more moments passed by, Ryūko staring longingly out the window to the room in bored frustration. Nui however continue to fiddle with her fabric, although her eye noticeably twitched as thoughts crawled their way to the surface.

Suddenly Nui placed down her textile turning back to Ryūko, "Its not like you wouldn't of killed."

Ryūko snapped back, "What?"

Nui elaborated, her words slithering out from her snake tongue, "You were ready to kill your own friends and "Family" just for your happiness, you were so scared of losing it after all… But now you're telling me you couldn't kill when you faced someone responsible for taking your dad away Because you were *tired?* "

Ryūko's stalwart expression broke into untamed ferocity, "You got a real death wish bringing that shit up, You know Ragyō fucked with my head!"

"Of course." Nui began shooting a smug venomous stare towards Ryūko, "But my dear Ryūko, do you wanna know what Ragyō once said to me? The best way to control someone is by giving them what they desire, and no not what they say they want, but the desire held within their heart, when those desires are satiated you can lead that someone like a lamb to the slaughter."

Ryūko was speechless, her shield of stoicism being ever so slightly pierced by Nui's unrelentingly fanged discoursed, the cracks in her shield unveiling an unsightly question consistently debated within Ryūko's mind; was that really the happiness she wanted? Ryūko refused to accept that.

"I…" Ryūko struggled to reply, her shock obvious on her face. However suddenly her eyes narrowed as she realised what to say, "And what about you Nui?"

Nui answered with confusion in a simple "Hm?"

Ryūko elaborated, her tone was calm and precise in it's malice, "What desire did Ragyō use to control you?"

Nui's pupil constricted as a cold look of rage within a silent frown displayed itself upon her face.

However just as Ryūko braced to clash with Nui's fury, Nui turned away, hiding her face, her voice surprisingly serene but melancholic, "… The right to live…"

Ryūko's eyes widened with shock, not expecting an actual answer, but before she had a chance to reply, Nui suddenly got up and quickly walked into the hotel room's bathroom, before slamming the bathroom door almost hard enough to send it off it's hinges and crack the attached wall.

Ryūko took in a moment to take in what had just happened, the shock slowly draining from her face.

Once the tension subsided she laid down on the sofa staring up at the ceiling, a single thought now resounding through her mind, "I'm hungry…" She then leant down to pick up her phone off the floor.

About an hour passed by before outside the hotel, bathed in the afternoon sun a man on a red scooter pulled up to the hotel entrance before pulling a couple of square shaped boxes from the back of his vehicle before running up to the door. Down the street from the hotel a black car held two gruff looking men in the front seats. One in the driver's seat smoking a cigarette with the car window rolled down, while the second man riding shotgun seemed to be looking through through a pair of black binoculars, focusing their view at the person on from the scooter.

The first man pulls the cigarette from his mouth, "So?"

The second man answered putting down his binoculars, "Looks like pizza."

The first responds, a casual consideration in his voice, "You know maybe we could try poison?"

The other retorts, "They're probably checking food from outside sources, and anyway, our… associates didn't mention whether or not poison would even do anything to them so I think its safe to assume it wouldn't work."

The first held his cigarette outside the car window, tapping it with his index finger to flick off the excess ash, "Hey… Why ain't our associates attacking this place? They know where this is too right?"

The second answered as he pulled out a phone out of his pocket, "You're joking right? Its obvious; this is the hornet's nest, kicking it like we're planning to do will brew up a shit storm."

The other snapped back, "Wait then why the hell are we gonna kick it then?"

A flame of fury sparked in the second man's eyes, targeted at the hotel, "Because we can't take this lying down, because we are the ruthless monsters of this world and this city belongs to us… Weakness is unacceptable for the highest demon."

The first placed his cigarette back in his mouth staring out the window with a fed up stare, "Man… I don't care about that shit, I just wanna get paid…"

The second answered back, "Yeah yeah I know, don't worry man, our associates assured us that the weapons they gave us will work on those two."

The first looked at his comrade raising a sceptical eyebrow, "And you sure these guys know what they are doing? They seemed pretty freaky to me…"

The second looked back with a sly malevolent smile, "Trust me, after seeing that shit they pulled in Akihabara? I know these guys are the

real deal."

True Nature

Gun shots rang out through the darkened hallway as the click of heels signalled an approach to the gun shot's source with measure steps. The individual reached a light at the end of the hall way where the sound of the gunfire was the loudest. Stepping into the light was the Researcher in the same getup of black smart trousers and light blue shirt beneath a large white lab coat, she pushed up her glasses gracefully to observe the room, however her gaze was callous and cold.

Within the lit room was a fairly extensive firing range, with various targets situated from the firing point. Aiming at the targets and firing carefully placed shots with one of his specially built emerald green pistols was the Operator. He was at this point not wearing his long military coat or combat vest and tie, exposing the black shirt usually worn beneath them as well as a double pistol holster over the shirt. He was also not wearing his formal military cap replacing them with a pair of sound muffling headphones, this lack of his usual head wear showed off his almost black hair with a slight extremely dark green hue. He was still wearing his gasmask however, largely covering his face save for his highly focused eyes.

The Operator noticed the Researcher's arrival, taking off his sound muffling headphones and stepping back to a metal table situated a few meters behind the shooting range. He then pulled out one of two metal chairs placed by the table.

As the Operator sat down he removed a cloth from his pocket as he proceeded to take apart his pistol and carefully wiped down each piece, "You need me for testing something?"

The Researcher walked across to take the other chair situated across from the Operator, crossing her legs with a casual bravado, "Hm no, actually I'm on break."

The Operator held a slight chuckle in his reply as he continued to carefully clean each part of his weapon, "Ha I didn't think you took breaks, you always seemed like such a busy woman."

The Researcher observed the Operator's cleaning for a second with a playfully raised eyebrow, "You know you don't have to do that right? The life fibers built into the weapon's frame can automatically consume and dirt and debris that touches the surface belonging to any part of the gun."

"I'm aware." The Operator responded as he refused to cease his work, "To me its more than just cleaning, it helps me get in tune with the gun, lets me more easily treat it as an extension of myself."

The Researcher scoffed as she turned to stare at the rooms right wall, away from the Operator, her gaze was lost in boredom, as if the wall was a window to see a far away sight, "Hmph, how Illogical…"

The Operator raised his eyes from his work for a second to look at the Researcher before looking back down at the gun parts, "Are you sure giving life fibers to those… *Thugs,* was a good idea? We need all the life fibers we can get to reach our goal don't we?"

The Researcher replied, turning her head but not her body back to the Operator, "Its fine, we need them to be capable of being a threat to the nudists for them to serve the purpose we require of them, which should be better than I originally hoped as it seems based on the combat data retrieved by the Reaper, Nui Harime is far weaker than I was expecting her to be, perhaps her revival had some… drawbacks for her life fiber's capabilities."

The Operator responded with an ambivalent mumble, "You still shouldn't underestimate her, nor Ryūko for that matter."

The Researcher retorted with a smug smile, "I don't plan to, but at any rate with the growth rate of the life fiber colony we should still be able to meet our goal within the expected time frame, the life fibers

we gave to those thugs is the equivalent to taking a glass of water from an ocean."

The Operator answered in return with a dejected grumble, "But you still want us to go out there and try to retrieve life fibers in the wild…"

The Researcher snapped back "Well of course, any life fibers you can find in the field widdles down the goal's completion deadline."

The Operator sighed as he set down the pieces of his weapon, "And giving away our life fibers to a bunch of two-bit criminals adds onto that deadline…"

The Researcher leant back into her seat, creating a bridge with her hands as she laid them on the table, "The benefits we can gain from the time the nudists are chasing that red herring out weighs the time taken off from giving said herring the life fibers." She then leant forwards, lying her hands flat on the table, "But that isn't what I wanted to speak to you about."

The Operator crossed his arms expectantly, "Oh yeah? And what's that?"

The Researcher elaborated with intrigue, "Well… its about you, you've never told anyone about why you joined the servants, except for the CEO that is…"

The Operator replied with raised eyebrows, "None of the others talk about why they're here, and besides why would you of all people want to know about that?"

The Researcher gestured with her arms spread open, "Its a part of my job to be curious after all, and well… I feel it would be easier to trust those who use my masterpieces if I know more about them."

The Operator gave a simple unenthusiastic "Hmph."

Leaning in, the Researcher stared intently at the Operator, "How about this… I have a new upgrade for your thread regalia in the works, if you tell me about why you joined the servants then I'll tell you what the upgrade is."

The Operator leaned forward as well, "If I said no, would you really jeopardise our mission by not telling me about this upgrade of yours?"

A mischievous smile emanated from the Researcher's face, providing a better answer than any words could.

The Operator sighed in acquiescence, "Fine fine…" He began to elaborate, a subtle melancholy permeating through his voice, "I was in the military when I joined the servants, having served for five years, its not like I had a calling for it, but my dad he was also in the military so I guess you could say he sorta got me into it, although he wasn't really around when I joined."

"What happened to him?" The Researcher questioned with soft curiosity.

The Operator was quiet for a moment, weighing up the will to answer before doing so with a solemn tone, "… He was killed ten years ago, so five years before I enlisted. Should be about a month away till the anniversary of his death actually… I was just thirteen at the time."

The Researcher casted her eyes down to the table, "I see…"

The Operator continued, "I wouldn't be the man I became if it wasn't for him, and that includes being a servant of the threads, around the time he died he was working as a professor in an institute studying life fibers in secret. Weird career change I know, but what mattered more is how he turned from working for the institute to being an agent for REVOCS."

"REVOCS?" The Researcher seemed somewhat surprised.

"Mhm" The Operator reaffirmed, "He was tasked with being a mole in that very same institute feeding information back to the company. Of course I didn't find this out until years after, but when I did it made more sense than you would think. My father was… A pessimistic man, he would talk a lot about the horrific things he saw, going around the world from battlefield to battlefield, his experiences met with atrocity after atrocity. And… I would meet the very same sights when I joined… and then his words hit ever harder."

The Researcher met the Operator's gaze, "And what was these words?"

The intensity increased in the Operator's voice, as he poured his emotion in what he was going to say, "My old man would say there's two types of people in this world; Liars and fools. Liars use fools to get what they want and fools use their ignorance to avoid becoming liars. Both are worthless. One will use those that hide behind ignorance to their advantage and the others are the one hiding behind ignorance, refusing to see the horrors in this world. You have to transcend this as an exception to the rule to truly change this horrific cycle, but as long as people like that are a rarity, things will never change. That is just human nature."

The Researcher nodded with understanding, "So he turned to the life fibers…"

The Operator replied, "Yeah… My old man believed that life fibers are the salvation for humanity, that to be consumed by them is to be more than food, but to become one with them, that humanity's minds would be preserved within the life fibers while transcending to be free of the nature that makes us destroy each other as we exist eternally amongst the stars. And well he's spread that belief to me, so when the CEO found me, telling me of a group with the same beliefs as me? joining it was a no brainer."

The Researcher responded with a cold confident smile, "And what about the nudists? They believe the life fibers want nothing for humanity but to use them as a resource."

The Operator scoffed as he picked up his gun from the table and slotting it into one of his holsters, "Hm, I can't hold it against them for being ignorant, but as I said; Liars and fools."

A slight chuckle came out of the Researcher's mouth as she stood up from the table before patting down her lab coat to rid it from folds, "Alright, as I promised, come with me to the testing chamber. I'll show you the upgrade, perhaps you could even try it out for me."

The Operator in turn stood up from the table as well, answering back with playful banter, "I thought you were on your break."

The Researcher answered back as the two made their way out of the shooting gallery, "You don't know? I don't take breaks."

Leaving one headquarters and going to another, Mikisugi observed behind the glass of the observation window into the testing chamber where Ryūko and Nui duked it out. He watched with a focused gaze and eyebrows furrowed in befuddled frustration, seemingly lost in anxieties for the future as he was unimpressed by what he saw.

True Nui was on the offensive, throwing a flurry of strikes towards Ryūko as she dashed towards her. Ryūko parrying the blows as she maintained distance with a back step.

Nui's back bent backwards as her face turned up to the ceiling, seemingly blown back by Ryūko's parry. Nui using this to wind up her next attack, her posture snapping back up like a pulled rubber band, Nui carrying the momentum into a swipe with both claws.

Ryūko blocked the attack, with both her blades crossed against each other, the impact of Nui's claws with Ryūko's blades leaving a shockwave in the air.

As soon as the swipe's of Nui's claws met Ryūko's weapons, Ryūko's mind was hit with a sudden observation, "Has she gotten… slower?"

Ryūko quickly retaliated by sending her knee flying flying into Nui's stomach. Nui seemingly not reacting to the attack, simply taking the hit without much of a whimper. Ryūko followed up her knee assault with a swing from one of her blades towards Nui's head.

Surprisingly the attack connected, and in a most gruesome fashion, as it proceeded to sever the top half of Nui's head from the rest of her body. Blood spurted out from where it used to be, the remainders of Nui's face becoming her mouth and chin while the top half splatted on the floor behind her, almost gliding away via her enormous twin drill hair.

Mikisugi, Clone Nui in her spectral form, and even Ryūko was wide eyed in surprise, as True Nui's body seemed to stumble before collapsing onto her back, a pool of blood gathering on the floor around where the top half of her head used to be.

A few seconds passed by before Nui's body began to twitch. It then suddenly picked itself up off of the floor with laboured motions, like a baby learning to walk before making it's way towards the severed piece of Nui's head, which's eye was open and looking about with a frenzied pace as it spasmed uncontrollably.

The body picked up the half of her head by one of the twin drills before slotting it onto where it used to be before being sliced off as if she were a cyclist putting on her helmet. She then waited expectantly for a second, before snapping her fingers in impatience.

"Oh right!" Clone Nui realised this was her cue as her spectral form rushed over to sew the invisible crimson threads between the severed piece and the rest of true Nui's head.

And thus quickly after clone Nui finished her work, the wounds in true Nui's head sealed up and her head was back to normal.

True Nui felt her face, touching several parts and even pinching in areas, almost as she was operating a machine and checking for

faults, "You can have that victory." She addressed Ryūko strangely casually with a monotone feel of disappointment in her voice.

Ryūko's shock simmered down into taken aback acceptance, "Right…" However as Nui began to walk away Ryūko snapped back, "Hey Nui! What the hell was that?"

Nui answered back in quiet irritation, "What on earth are you talking about…?"

Ryūko continued, her eyes squinting with infuriation, "Come on, your attacks were weaker and way slower than the last time, so what's going on? you taking it easy on me or something?"

Nui answered with a defeated sigh, "I wouldn't say that… Just still not used to needing to try, so I got rather tired of it."

This very notion only served to confuse Ryūko, "Huh?"

Nui replied, catching on to Ryūko's befuddlement, "So you haven't noticed…" Ryūko's eyes widened before Nui elaborated, "Ever since I… *Awakened* I have been disturbingly weaker than I used to be… Its like I'm back to being a novice starting up combat training…"

Ryūko scoffed with irritation, "Never felt like that before."

Nui snapped back angrily, "I would damn well hope so! If there's anything I remember learning from lady Ragyō, its to hide your weakness. I would usually do it via never playing my full hand, fighting with elegance… Now I have to put all my effort into the fight while pretending I'm not putting any in at all…"

Ryūko uttered a dismissive, "Right…"

Nui however turned away as she seemed to become more and more furious as she uttered to herself through seething hisses and clenched teeth, "I used to fight like a queen of the battlefield… and now… And now!" She pressed her foot into the ground hard enough

to leave a crack in the stone of the testing chamber floor, "And NOW I fight like a rabid animal!"

Ryūko almost gasped, met with another sight piercing through Ryūko's understanding of who Nui was, "Nui?"

Nui refused to turn towards Ryūko, as she continued clenching her teeth hard enough to almost shatter them. And without a word she marched off out of the testing chamber, Leaving Ryūko to watch her, confused on how to feel.

Mikisugi scratched his head before reaching down to activate the the receiver for the testing chamber speakers, "Just er… Head back to the hotel for now, Nui is probably heading to the car right now anyway."

As Ryūko began to leave from the testing chamber, Tsumugu appeared stepping forwards to stand next to Mikisugi in the laboratory, as he joined him in looking into the testing chamber, "Yo, how's your little experiment going?"

Mikisugi sighed with frustration, "Could be going better to say the least, seems like all we've achieved is breaking down Nui's self esteem…"

Tsumugu answered back without skipping a beat, "Then kill her." Mikisugi vocalised an uncomfortable sigh as Tsumugu continued, "If She can't get the job done then she's just a liability, someone that's dangerous enough to need a leash but not dangerous enough to our enemies to take 'em down ain't worth keeping around."

Mikisugi refused to reply with stone cold silence, as he continued to gaze intensely into the testing chamber.

Tsumugu turned to look at Mikisugi, "You don't have to be the one to do it *this time,* just let me push the button for her collar and we got one less pain in our asses."

Mikisugi finally answered, simply but firm, "She WILL get the job done."

Tsumugu tutted with aggravated disapproval as he turned to walk away, "Tsk your own friend but not the bitch that put down the old man, what a fucking joke."

Mikisugi returned to becoming stoically silent, as Tsumugu exited the laboratory. An air of melancholy surrounding him like a dark cloud.

A female nudist beach agent in a lab coat approached Mikisugi hesitantly, "Sir? Are you alright?"

Mikisugi turned his head to the agent, putting on a calm and confident smile, "Yeah I'm fine thanks."

The agent replied with her own wry smile, "Oh no problem sir, by the way we have a team going with Nui and Ryūko to the hotel to finally set up the new barrier system."

Mikisugi responded, retaining his usual playful flourish, "Excellent, now we can be absolutely sure we're ready if anyone is stupid enough to fall into that honey pot."

"Sir? Are you sure you're ok?" The Agent continued to press, noticing a fault in his demeanour.

Mikisugi answered, furrowing concerned eyebrows, "Er yeah… Why ask again?"

The Agent, the reservation clear in her voice, "I just know that you're the kind of person to stay quiet when something is hurting inside…"

Mikisugi's face broke with surprise before reforming into a sombre smile, "Ah I see… I guess, I'm just not ready to talk about it right now."

The agent nodded solemnly, "I understand… But we're all here when you need us, Since we don't just see you as our boss you know."

Mikisugi gave a quiet, short but grateful chuckle, "Thank you, I'll be sure to keep that in mind."

Meanwhile, Ryūko made her way through the headquarters lobby towards the entrance.

She let out an audible "Hmph." As she was met with the sight of Nui on the outside of the building leaning casually the glass door.

"Surprised you're not waiting in the car." Ryūko stepped through the glass doors, staring off at the black armoured car parked outside of the building.

Nui's gaze was drawn to Ryūko, although this quickly changed as she turned to pout, "Tch this driver wasn't comfortable spending any time alone with me."

Ryūko smiled slyly, "Can't exactly blame 'em, anyway lets get going."

Nui replied with a dismissive "Mhm."

However as the two began walking towards the vehicle, a voice rang out as an individual stepped out from the front doors, "yo bimbo bitch."

Nui, realising the insult was of course directed at her, turned her attention back to the door to see Tsumugu staring at her with his usual malevolent glare, "Ugh it's you." She remarked with annoyed exasperation, "What do you want ugly mohawk man?"

Ryūko looked over her shoulder at the two with a curious glint in her eyes, however she turned back to walking towards the car.

Tsumugu replied to Nui, un-phased by her sassy antagonism, "Woulda thought you'd learn my name by now."

Nui retorted, "Oh I have, but if you think I can be bothered to use it then you're sorely mistaken."

Tsumugu responded with almost bemused understanding, "Hm fair enough."

Nui snapped back impatiently "Anyway cut to the chase, what do want?"

Tsumugu answered as he steeled his gaze, "Not much, just to tell you to stop pretending to be something you're not."

Nui raised her singular eyebrow, "Excuse me?"

Tsumugu elaborated, "Heard what ya said back in the test chamber, how now you fight like a rabid animal? Why are you pretending like that ain't exactly what you are?"

Nui clenched her teeth as a hint of anger crawled across her face, "You either got brass balls or that dumb mohawk is sapping out your IQ."

Tsumugu pressed on however, "I've seen your memories, how you fight when your backs against the wall, its your true nature, I know because I've fought the same way. So How about ya get off your high horse, cut the prissy bullshit and accept what you are."

Tsumugu's words seem to drudge up the same rage as before within Nui as it began to bubble back to the surface, Nui's furious glare meeting Tsumugu's cold judgemental gaze, "How dare-"

"YO! You still going over there?! I Don't wanna be here all day y'know!" Suddenly before the sparks between Nui and Tsumugu could grow into an inferno, Ryūko shouted out from over by the car.

Ryūko's voice seemed to break Nui away from her argument as she turned to walk away as Tsumugu continued stare at her with his unrelenting poker face.

As Nui entered the car, Ryūko gave her a quick look before turning her head back towards the entrance to see Tsumugu standing there

before turning to go back inside the HQ. Ryūko then shrugged before getting in the car as well, a moment later the car pulling away from the building.

Returning to the hotel, Ryūko and Nui passed through the security checkpoint stationed in the lobby, the agents checking the two with various devices, including, metal detectors, blood pressure monitors and even radiation detectors.

During this, something gained Nui's attention as she shot a curious peek around the nudist agents carrying out their checks. What she saw appeared to be several nudist agents, carrying out what appeared to be construction work on the lobby, carrying panels of black metal material, drilling them into machinery embedded in the floor and laying various cables.

Nui's peeking was broken however as the checks were complete allowing the two to head upstairs.

Ryūko collapsed on the sofa immediately upon reaching the hotel room, throwing her arm casually over the side. Nui sat cross legged on the front of her bed, leaning forward as she held her head in her arms, propping them up via her elbows on her knees.

Ryūko took out her phone as she sighed with exhaustion, "Man I'm starving… Gonna get some take out for lunch."

Nui replied, the boredom oozing through out her tone, "Didn't you do the same thing yesterday?"

Ryūko answered with irritation, "Had pizza yesterday, gonna get some Chinese food this time and besides, all that exercise burned a lotta calories."

Nui responded unenergetically as her attention lackadaisically wandered out the window seemingly into the distance, "I see you haven't figured out how to maintain your bodily intake with your life

fibers yet, can't really blame you, took a while for me to master that…"

Ryūko casually tapped her phone's screen casually with on hand, "You like Chinese food Nui?"

Nui continued to stare out the window as she answered, "If I tried it before then I don't remember… Maybe on one of my missions." She then fell onto her back on the bed, her face towards the ceiling, "I tried a lot of foods back then… I wanted to try all that I could when I became grand couturier, although I had a particular fondness for sweet things."

Ryūko replied with a casual sassiness, "Oh yeah? Didn't know you were much of a foodie."

Nui elaborated as a tinge of melancholy creeped its way into her voice, "I had a strict diet back before I became grand couturier, since I hadn't learned to manage my body via my life fibers and they needed me in peak condition."

Ryūko pushed herself up to peer over the sofa with one arm, "A diet? W-what kind of diet?"

Nui responded almost as if she ranted to herself, refusing to face away from the ceiling, "They had what was called "Nutrient cubes" they were a few centimetre long, I ate only three per day and they tasted like carboard, but they supposedly had all the vitamins, proteins and energy supplements I required… Still I hated them."

A bead of sweat dropped down Ryūko's head as she was hit with the awkwardness filling the scene, "R-right…"

Nui continued like she was caught in a trance, "The other part of the diet was the regurgitation sessions every other day, that ones pretty self explanatory, at first the sensation was like filling my mouth with acid each time… but eventually I got used to it."

Ryūko uttered in disgusted surprise, "Christ…"

Nui suddenly sat up, a furious look splayed across her face, "But the worst part about it? Was that shit head of a handler!"

Ryūko was taken aback but the sudden out burst of anger, "Handler?"

Nui seemed to simmer down upon seeing the look on Ryūko's face, "… He called himself "Dr R" he was a truly pathetic human, but he had skills and… *dedication,* that made him a useful asset, so he was tasked to overseeing my development to become the grand couturier, development including; my behaviours, my physicality, psychological state etc. a task he was fiendishly avid about."

Ryūko raised a morbidly curious eyebrow, "The hell does that mean?"

Nui was quiet for a moment before answering, "Well for one he augmented himself with machine parts to prevent himself from needing sleep, so when he was around he would observe me every moment of every day, and if I did anything considered… unrefined, then I would get a shock via a device implanted in my spine, since I hadn't learned yet to control my pain receptors, the device was also meant to help train me in that as well. The bastard would even shock me while I was sleeping just because I wasn't sleeping in a way fit for the grand couturier."

Ryūko replied with a wry expression, "Yeah sounds like a real asshole to say the least."

Nui let out an aggravated sigh, "And the worst part is, even when I became the grand couturier and got the chance to kill him, the bastard was elated, always calling me "his masterpiece" I wonder what he say if he could see me now…"

Ryūko tried to cut through the awkwardness with a more positive tone, "Well fuck him, that guy's work is down the drain now."

"I never wanted to be a product of *his* work." Nui responded with over coming solemnness "I just wanted to make Lady Ragyō proud…"

Ryūko matched Nui's solemn demeanour, "Cuz that's the only thing that mattered to you right? I get it, its just like what we talked about before at Satsuki's house, you can't fight if you're too scared to lose your reasons to fight along the way and that was your reason to fight. But y'know Nui in the end you gotta face the music, one way or another, and that means accepting the truth; that things aren't gonna go back to the way it was, but by rising up to meet that truth, you can make something better out of it."

Nui snapped back, "So what? let loose? Fight like a rabid animal?!"

Ryūko answered simply, but her words cut through Nui's lashing out like a hot knife through butter, "Why not? It was that bastard that beat the refined methods into you right? So what better way to spite him than throwing all those methods in the trash? To be truly free."

Nui face froze up before looking down at the floor in dejection, "Maman would be disgusted with me…"

Ryūko retorted like a therapist trying to get through to her patient, "She doesn't have to know, and well… Baby birds gotta fly the nest sometime, right?"

Nui was quiet for a moment as she suddenly raised her head with a stern gleam in her eye.

Ryūko almost jumping expecting to get into another argument, however Nui responded calmly, "If I'm gonna fight like that… I may commit to a heretical sin…"

Ryūko was hit with sudden confusion, "Huh?"

Nui turned her head away, holding her chin as she uttered to herself, pondering with an intense look on her face, "Without a god robe and

without the power of my original life fibers… Yeah there would be no other way… But can I really do it? Lady Ragyō would be furious with me even considering such a thing…"

Ryūko continued to be confused as she prodded in befuddled curiosity, "Er Nui?"

Nui built up the confidence in herself with deep breathes before turning back to Ryūko, her eye now aflame with determination, "Ryūko, I need you answer me just one question."

"W-what is it?" Ryūko answered as the tension climbed in her face.

Suddenly A sinister razor sharp toothed smile crawled across Nui's mouth, "Would you be willing to defile yourself for your power? For the awakening… Of your true nature?"

Devil's return

Mako wearing her school uniform crossed the road right before a bunch of cars rushed by, almost hitting the clueless girl. However she continued to bear a casual smile as she stepped down the street with a playful pep in her steps. A few moments of walking and Mako turned to see the hotel, her expression freezing up with apprehension, however she stowed away her fear as she marched courageously towards the hotel entrance.

Upon entering the hotel lobby, Mako quietly approached the central desk, "Hello?"

The clerk behind the desk, who was of course nudist agent posing as a clerk answered with troubled confusion, "M-Mako? What are you doing here?"

Mako replied earnestly, "I'm here to see Ryūko and Nui!"

The clerk wiped his eyebrows wryly, "Mako… Two of our highest profile assets are staying here, we're on high alert…"

Mako answered back obliviously, "So?"

Drops of sweat began to roll down the clerk's forehead, "S-so you… You can't-"

Suddenly the clerk was cut off by a man with neat blonde hair and was wearing a pair of black sunglasses and a grey suit bearing a tag reading "Manager" the man stood with relaxed confidence, but shone a sly smile and had an air of analytical cynicism, "Its fine let her through."

The clerk suddenly turned in shock, "But Capt- I mean Manager!"

The "Manager" replied with playful bemusement, "Trust me Corporal, trying to argue with her is like trying to stop a hurricane with your

bare hands, besides if something were to happen now, I can't think of anyone who can protect her better than Ryūko."

"Even with *her* around?" A drop of sweat edged its way down the clerk's forehead.

The manager however remained stalwart, "Yes even with her around."

The clerk Sighed before gesturing to their right, "Alright… miss Mako, please step to the side here."

Mako threw her arms up in celebration, "Yay! Thank you manager er…"

The manager spoke up as he removed his sunglasses revealing bright emerald eyes, "Call me Shimazaki, and you're very welcome Mako."

A moment passed where the clerk conducted the various security scans on Mako before she was allowed to step through into the hotel hallways and taking an elevator to arrive at the floor holding Ryūko and Nui's room.

As Mako approached the room, voices rang out from the door down the corridor.

One voice, sounding like Ryūko's, cried out in soft aggravation, "Damn it's so tight!"

Mako's pace towards the room slowed to a crawl as her face shone a ruby red like steam was building up in her head towards an explosion, "T-tight…?"

As Mako got ever closer to the hotel door another voice replied to Ryūko's, this one of course being Nui's "Come on its not that tight… Now push!"

Ryūko snapped back, the struggle audible in her voice, "I'm tryin'! its just really hard…"

Mako meanwhile, welled up her courage to approach the hotel door, shaking her head to shoo away her panic as she noticed a thin slit cut into the door, Mako attempting to persuade herself to peek through.

After hearing a few more… questionable sounds from the hotel room, Mako pressed her eye against the slit in the door.

What she saw, appeared to be Ryūko in her underwear, hanging in the air like a bug in a spider's web. She seemed to hang from crimson threads attached from wall to wall of the hotel room.

Nui stood close by with her hand on her hip, looking at Ryūko expectantly. Ryūko's face was twisted in turmoil as she breathed heavily, letting out struggled moans.

Mako's eyes grew wide, her face becoming even more red as if it was hot enough to melt steel, "Ryūko?!" She couldn't stop her voice from crying out.

Ryūko quickly turned her attention to the hotel door in her shock, "Mako?!"

Nui reacted with an irritated grumble, "Ugh why is the bobble head here?"

Mako shouted back in confusion, "What the heck is going on?!"

Nui projected a sly smile as she snuggled close to Ryūko, placing a hand on Ryūko's tummy, much to her infuriation, "Oh just having some fun~ wanna join in?"

Mako panicked of course, "M-me?! I… I'm not sure I'm ready…"

Ryūko cut in angrily, "Dammit! Stop trying to confuse her Nui! Look Mako this is not what it looks like!"

Mako answered back, almost down trodden, "Man I can't believe it… did I play too hard to get?"

Nui gave an annoyed sigh as she marched towards the hotel door, "Ugh just get inside already." She swiped her room key over the electronic lock, causing the door to click open.

Mako apprehensively stepped inside the hotel room, "Wait so you aren't doing… *That* stuff?"

Ryūko replied as Nui slammed the door close, "Come on Mako you really think I would do that with Nui?"

Nui butted into the interaction, with what appeared to be genuine disappointment, "Awww why not?"

Ryūko retorted with teeth clenched in irritation, "You know the fact you are even asking that just pisses me off."

Mako cut through the tension obliviously, "Ok… But if you guys aren't doing… that stuff, then what ARE you doing?"

Nui answered casually, "I'm teaching Ryūko to manipulate the life fibers inside her body, specifically to draw them to the surface of her flesh for the moment. Which is why she's in her underwear, for me to see the life fibers come out of her skin. *Also because its really sexy~* "

Mako continued to questioned curiously, "Oh… Can she control where the fibers come out of her from?"

Nui raised her eyebrow at the inquiry, not expecting it from Mako, "Well yes once she has some practice, but at the moment we're trying to just get the threads to surface from her body."

Mako's curiosity became an energetic sparkle in her eyes, "But doesn't that mean it could come out of her butt!?"

Ryūko spouted out in shock, "M-Mako?" Clone Nui as well joining Ryūko in silent terror at the proposition.

True Nui however seemed calmly taken aback by the question, when suddenly she began to hold her chin as she actually started to ponder the possibility, "Hm I never thought about that…" She then turned to Ryūko with an excited smile, "Alright Ryūko, new experiment!"

Ryūko simply shouted back with a stern "NO!"

Mako cut in once more to again shift the topic of the conversation, "But what are you guys gonna do with your life fibers?"

Nui appeared coldly distant for a brief moment before sharply inhaling, "We… Are going to attempt something called forced life fiber re-adaptation."

Mako looked at Nui with a blank stare signifying her confusion.

Ryūko replied in Mako's stead, "You MIGHT wanna break it down for her."

Nui grumbled irritably, "Ugh fine…" Nui stepped forward and turned to face Mako as she leaned casually on Ryūko, much to Ryūko's irritation, "So when life fibers form a collective, they are imbued with a specific purpose, these can be multiple things, such as when an outfit is made with life fibers, the form they take can reflect the purpose imbued into them, you make a bra to hold up a pair of boobs after all, same goes when making an outfit with life fibers! However when it comes to life fiber entities-"

Mako interrupted, "A lot of tits in this explanation."

Nui snapped back in annoyed confusion, "What?"

Mako continued, oblivious to Nui's irritation, "Holding up boobs, en-
"Titties."

Nui, unamused, shut down Mako's prodding, "Stop talking." Mako quickly shutting up, allowing Nui to continue, "So… As I was saying, when it comes to life fiber entities, them being life fiber collectives controlled by a dominant mind, like me and Ryūko, their life fibers are determined by their dominant minds. However when the life fibers of a dominant mind has moulded to fit a required purpose, it can be practically impossible for those life fibers to change, unless they are specifically created to never truly set within a single formation *like a god robe.* But what we are doing here… we are going to forcibly weaken our threads so they can be cut and be allowed to reform in a new state with a new purpose!"

Mako was quiet for a moment before responding, "I… don't think I understand all of that… but basically you're gonna use that to get super strong?"

Nui answered simply, "Well to unlock the potential of mine and Ryūko's life fibers yes."

A shine of amazement sparked in Mako's eyes, "Woah… You guys can get even stronger? That's amazing! Why is it you didn't do this before?"

Nui suddenly clapped both hands on each side of Mako's head with an intense look on her face, "Because its HERESY!"

Ryūko's eyes widened as a bead of sweat rolled down her forehead, "Nui…"

Nui drew back from Mako, her demeanour quickly simmering down, "Ahem… Lady Ragyō said it was extremely taboo to do that to my life fibers, knocked out a few of my baby teeth out for even attempting something like this, said it "Ruins the purity of my life fibers." But desperate times call for desperate measures, so… here we are."

Mako was stunned, hesitant to speak, "R-right…"

Ryūko spoke up worriedly, "I'm sorry about that Mako, she reacted that way when I asked too…"

Nui appeared to turn around towards the hotel room window, Ryūko assuming out of anger.

Mako seemed to relax as she turned to Ryūko, "Yeah sounds like a touchy subject."

Nui appeared to place a hand on the window as she drew close to the glass, detecting a faint sound akin to a rush of wind. Suddenly She stepped away from the window and approached Mako who was continuing to talk with Ryūko. Nui then grabbed Mako by the collar of her school uniform, lifting her off the ground. And before Ryūko and Mako had a chance to react, Nui suddenly threw Mako across the hotel room into the bathroom.

Almost on instinct, Ryūko shouted out in shock, "WHAT THE FU-?!"

BOOM. Suddenly an explosion erupted from the Hotel room window, knocking Ryūko down from the threads holding her up and enveloping the room in smoke and dust.

Clone Nui watched in her non-corporeal form, as the dust dissipated, unveiling the husk of what used to be the hotel room. The walls partially collapsing as celling panels littered the floor.

Clone Nui upon seeing the wreckage of her room could only utter a single thing, "My kotatsu table…"

True Nui stood by, seemingly unscathed, as she flicked a speck of dirt off her shoulder, "Relax, the nudists will get you a new one."

Ryūko, who appeared just as undamaged, coughed as she picked herself off the floor, "Christ… Mako you ok?!"

Mako stood up disorientated in the bathroom, looking about to get her bearings before shouting back to Ryūko, "I'm okay! Kind of…"

Ryūko sighed with relief before turning to Nui, "Damn it Nui, a little more warning next time."

Nui seemed to unflinchingly stare out of the gaping hole that used to be the window and outermost walls of the hotel room, "A little more warning and your bobble headed friend over there would be a red stain on the floor, *oh what a shame that would be…"*

Ryūko exclaimed irritably, "Ugh whatever, lets just focus on whatever the hell that was."

Nui uttered casually, "Sounded like a rocket."

Ryūko repeated in confusion, "A rocket?!"

Nui nodded as she went to walk towards the edge of the hotel room's wreckage, "Mhm, sounded like it came from a downward angle too, which would mean it came from riiiiight below-"

A gun shot rang out. Ryūko rushed to kick Nui to the side, as a crimson headed bullet brushed across Nui's cheek leaving a single mark and drawing a few drips of blood. Nui collapsed flat on the ground behind a piece of rubble without resistance like a plank of wood.

A man in black combat overalls lied belly down in the high floor of a sky scraper a few blocks across from the hotel before a shattered window. He was peering down the scope of a large sniper rifle. Behind the man a squad of other similarly dressed rugged looking men preparing assault rifles and pistols.

Less than a second after he fired his shot at Nui, the sniper's eye peering down the scope widened as they suddenly exclaimed in disbelief, "Shit!"

One of the squad from behind him quickly prodded urgently, "What happened?"

The sniper answered with frustrated furrowed brows, "I-I missed, no somehow they were able to dodge my shot."

Another one of the squad cut in worriedly, "But wasn't the rocket launcher shot supposed to slow them down?! Did we get fed bad info…?"

One more of the squad stepped forward this one having a strong commanding presence appearing to be the leader. He spoke as he was resting his assault rifle on his shoulder, "What ever the case, if they find our position in this building, we'll be getting a full assault. I'll call in back up just in case."

Back in the Hotel room, Ryūko quickly scrounged to get to her own cover behind the rubble of a collapsed wall on the other side of the room from Nui, "Stay down! Sniper!"

Nui raised her head, to answer while her body remained rigid on the floor, "Mhm! seems to be a two stage operation… By the way great reaction time! You must of built up quite the resistance to that anti life fiber material."

Ryūko replied with a simple confused, "Huh?"

Nui answered with curious surprise, "You haven't noticed? That rocket I told you about seemed to be an anti life fiber explosive, much like those thread spool grenades used by the dumb mohawk guy! Meaning the explosive contained a particulate form of the anti life fiber mineral used in life fiber severing blades and other equipment. They must of thought the explosive would slow us down enough for the sniper to finish us off with life fiber bullets."

Ryūko gritted her teeth with frustration as she flattened her back against the rubble she too cover behind, "Shit, you think its the servants again?"

Nui held her chin as she pondered, "Hm… The gear checks out, but the plan is certainly too flimsy for the servant's usual more

confrontational approach."

Ryūko nodded in agreement, "You got a point, those assholes were definitely more upfront than this."

Nui replied back as she rose to crouch behind her cover, taking out a flat textile puppet resembling herself from an unseen point in her dress, "Lets not worry about that for now, at the moment lets focus on figuring out where our little sniper is…"

Returning to the sniper who continued to watch intently through his scope, waiting for even an inch from either of his two targets.

Meanwhile another from the sniper squad crouched next to him peering down a pair of binoculars, "You sure they won't just crash through the floor?"

The sniper replied with irritation, "At this angle I should be able to see them even if they do, now can you shut up? I need to focus-"

The sniper suddenly cut himself off as he caught movement in the hotel room. Nui came out of her cover to run across the room. The sniper, reacting quickly, popped a single shot into Nui's head, only for the body of Nui to disappear into a puff of smoke mid fall to the floor, the sniper's eye looking through the scope once again widening in shock.

As the sniper was focused on sniping the clone, the real Nui peered over her cover, in the general direction of where she believed the sniper must of been firing from. And with her life fiber enhanced vision, she caught the glimpse of light reflecting off a scope and the spark of muzzle fire from a building in the distance.

Nui smiled fiendishly, "Found you~"

Returning to the sniper, one of his comrades approached from behind immediately after he fired a shot, "Did ya get one?"

The sniper answered continuing to stare down his scope as bead of sweat crawled down his face, "I got a hit on target one, but a puff of smoke surrounded her mid fall, and now she seems to have disappeared…"

His comrade gasped, "Wait… could it have been…"

The sniper answered back, "You mean she really can create clones?! Like full on clones?! I Thought they meant that was some sort of trick! Do you know how many of those she can make?"

As his comrade struggled to form an answer, back in the hotel room, Nui pulled out eight of her clone spawning puppets, "Alright Ryūko dear, I'm gonna go take care of our little sniper friend, you should probably use this as an opportunity to make your own escape."

Ryūko snapped back, "Wait you're going on your own?!"

Nui replied like she was spelling out the obvious, "Well yes, you need to look after your bobble head friend don't you? And besides I think you're gonna be quite busy here."

Before Ryūko had a chance to ponder what Nui meant by this, Nui threw out her clones, filling the room with a crowd of doppelganger Nuis with the real Nui joining the group. The sniper hurried to fire at the nine Nuis in a panic however he could only hit four before the other five began to fall out of the hotel room window.

Ryūko using this as her opportunity barged into the bathroom while the sniper focused on Nui.

"Ryūko! Are you alright?!" Mako exclaimed in surprise.

Ryūko answered as she gestured Mako to move back from the backmost bathroom wall, "Yeah I'm fine, but I need you to get back from the wall real quick."

Mako going along with Ryūko's command stepped away from the wall. This was followed by a strong shout from Ryūko as she dove her fist into the bathroom wall and with a loud crash, opening a large hole in the wall leading to the hotel corridors.

Ryūko stepped through first, apprehensively checking both directions of the corridor like a S.W.A.T member clearing a room.

After a second of checking, she nodded to Mako, causing her to follow close behind, "Where's Nui?" Mako uttered.

Ryūko replied with a befuddled sigh, "Said she was going after the sniper."

Mako suddenly raised her voice with peculiar enthusiasm, "A sniper?! Like from the movies?!"

Ryūko was hit with momentary confusion, "Er… Yeah I guess?" However her focus returned quickly, "Anyway she mentioned I'm gonna be "busy" here but I… Oh shit the lobby!"

Mako looked bewildered, "The lobby?"

Ryūko began to pull Mako by the hand as she hurriedly walked down the corridor, "Whoever's attacking is probably fighting the nudists in the lobby, most likely the group that fired the rocket at the hotel room." She stopped mid walk to turn back to Mako, placing a hand on her shoulder, "Alright Mako I need you to hide in one of these hotel rooms, and DON'T come out until you hear me calling for you alright?"

Mako uttered a quiet "Oh alright…" Still struggling to grasp the urgency of the situation.

Ryūko gave a quick "Don't worry I'll be okay." Before dashing down the corridor to join the fight.

Meanwhile the sniper surveyed the hotel room through his scope one last time before picking up his rifle and raising to a crouch, "Shit… both targets have seemed to have escaped."

His comrades muttered between each other, prepping their weapons, before the leader stepped forward, "Well it seems the mission is a bust then. Lets exfiltrate."

Another one of the squad cut in worriedly, "Wait what about our boys in the lobby?!"

The leader replied solemnly, "Not much we can do for them, sending any reinforcements would just be sending more guys to get captured."

"Good point!" A voice cut in followed by surprised horrified gasps from the squad members, as they turned to see Nui now standing at the shattered window, her skirt fluttering in the wind, "However… I wonder how they'll react when they hear that face to face with you~" A fiendish smile crawled across her mouth.

Returning to the hotel, Ryūko's suspicions was confirmed as she began to hear echoing gunshots, the closer to the hotel lobby she got.

Down in the hotel lobby, there were six Nudist agents armed with needle rifles, three wearing formal attire while the other three dressed in typical crimson hotel bell boy outfits. The nudist agents took cover behind black metal panels propelled from openings in the floor by machinery, while needle firing turrets attached to the ceiling laid down covering fire. The turrets fired at five men in black combat overalls wielding more conventional seeming assault rifles and hid behind chairs stacked on flipped over tables from the lobby.

One of the men attacking the lobby shouted out to his comrades over the gunfire, "Damn it! Their defences are better than expected, any word from B team?!"

Another one of the men replied, "No not yet! We need to get the hell out of here before their reinforcements arrive!"

A third individual in the squad attempted to peek out from behind their cover, only for a barrage of needles to fire into their arm. They attempted to remove the needles, however their body began to become stiff like a statue causing them to fall over.

One of his comrades, crept over to the frozen body before attempting to pull the needles out of the man's arm.

Suddenly another from the squad shouted at the one attempting to pull the needles, "Don't pull 'em out! If you don't pull in the right way it'll send him into shock!"

The Nudists crouched behind their own cover, one speaking up with strong, confident composure, "Defences are working well."

Another spoke, appearing to be the clerk behind the main desk before, the uttered with a frantic panicked tone, "Did you see the red tips of their bullets?! It looks like they're using life fibers!"

Then another cut in with cautious curiosity, "You think it's the servants?"

One more spoke up with gruff irritation, "Hmph I doubt it, these guys aren't nearly as good, or well informed."

Then to finish off Shimazaki responded with a strong commanding tone, "Doesn't matter, we'll find out who these assholes are once we take 'em down."

The gun fight continued till suddenly Ryūko kicked down the stair way door at the top right of the lobby.

Shimazaki noticing Ryūko didn't have her blades, pulled out his own tailor's dagger, "Ryūko!" He threw his dagger to which Ryūko grabbed out of the air as she began running towards the attackers.

The attackers taken aback with shock barely had a chance to respond as Ryūko leapt over their cover and attacked the right most member of the squad first, cutting apart his his rifle and kicking him in the stomach hard enough to send him flying at another of his squad. The others turned to train their rifles on Ryūko raining upon her with a barrage of gunfire while she responded by cutting their bullets out of the air.

Realising the attackers were cornered, Shimazaki leapt over his cover and began charging towards the enemy's. Ryūko advanced forward slowly as she continuously parried the bullets, until members of the enemy squad needed to reload, to which she advanced quicker as she parried the lesser barrage of bullets. She knocked out the first member of the squad she reached with a single punch to the face before hitting the next with a round house kick to the side of their head.

The last man, having been unable to get a shot before and realising his rifle was ineffective by this point, pulled a black bladed knife. Ryūko pointed her tailors dagger at the man readying to square off, however before the two could fight, Shimazaki leapt over the attacker's cover as he one hand fired several needles into the last attacker's chest.

"Yo." Shimazaki said simply to Ryūko as he reloaded his needle rifle, standing over the now paralysed attacker's body.

"Do all you guys say that?" Ryūko tossed the tailors dagger back to Shimazaki, who caught it casually with one hand.

Shimazaki by this point was too focused for small talk however, "Where's Nui?"

"I'm hereeee~!" With impeccable timing as usual Nui burst through the hotel front door with arms spread wide like a showman at at a circus.

Ryūko was unamused yet unfazed by Nui's casual demeanour, "You get the sniper?"

Nui answered with her usual jovial tone, "Mhm! And then some!" She proceeded to lead both Shimazaki and Ryūko outside the hotel, where a pile of fifth-teen men in black combat overalls stacked on top of each other laid at the entrance to the hotel, "They called in back up in case we found their location, but its no problem for me and my adorable doppelgangers!"

Ryūko scoffed as she shrugged and shook her head, "tsk ever the show off…"

Shimazaki rubbed his chin with a befuddled frown, "These guys probably went through a horror movie scenario… Maybe we should get a trauma councillor in for the interrogations…"

Nui waltzed up to the pile of men before grabbing one of their arms, "Aaaaand I also know who's attacked us!" She lowered the sleeve of the man, revealing the tattoo of a red Oni wielding a large sword. "Tadaa~"

"That's…" Shimazaki uttered however he let the word trail off as he got lost in thoughts.

Nui in turn finished the trail for him, "Yup! Looks like our friends the high akuma paid us a visit."

Ryūko replied confused, "The High Akuma? I thought nudist beach and the police took them down."

Shimazaki answered, his face lost in thought, "The police raided a number of their hideouts, but criminal syndicates like these are akin to cockroaches, can be practically impossible to weed them out completely, and now with the gear they got… Seems like they're in league with the servants."

A moment of quiet arrived as the revelation settled upon them. Suddenly Tsumugu on his bike accompanied by two black trucks bearing the nudist beach insignia rolled up to the entrance of the hotel.

Tsumugu pushed down the kickstand on his bike with his foot before stepping off, "Yo. Any casualties?"

Shimizaki answered with cool professionalism, "Yo. No, no casualties, the new defences worked like a charm."

Ryūko grumbled under her breath with irritation, " *Getting real tired of hearing that word…* " She then suddenly raised her voice angrily, "Where the hell were you while this shit was going on huh?!"

Tsumugu replied as he pulled out a cigarette packet from his pocket, taking out a cig, placing it in his mouth and lighting up, "Its not my permanent job to babysit you, I was chasing up reports of possible life fiber entity sightings as well as servant activities." He then pointed with his thumb to the vehicles behind him, "Now lets go, Boss wants you reporting in at HQ."

Shimazaki responded as his team came out from the hotel entrance, "I'll stick around, give our new guests our finest hospitality."

Tsumugu nodded "Understood, but keep your schedule open, with the hotel in the state it is now we're gonna need you working other positions while we get this place up to scratch."

Shimazaki gave a salute as his team began to move the High Akuma members inside, "Roger that."

Tsumugu stepped back onto his bike while Ryūko followed by Nui each entered the black trucks. Nui gave a playful wave towards the hotel entrance as the vehicles pulled away from the hotel and made their way to the nudist beach HQ.

Suddenly however one of the trucks pulled to a halt as, Ryūko opened her car door and walked quickly back into the hotel, "Sorry, need to get Mako."

Author's note:

Hello thank you for reading! I apologise about how long its been, life has been rather troublesome, with finishing a job and trying to find a new one as well as just general writer's block so I apologise again if this chapter isn't up to the quality of my previous ones. There's a long road ahead for this story, but as long as it may take I am determined to finish it, so I hope you continue to read and enjoy Life La Life.

How to catch a devil

Nui and Ryūko sat two seats across from each other along the right side of a long board room table surrounded by seats. The board room being a fairly minimalistic chamber encased in concrete sound proofed walls and a blue carpeted floor. With a metal sliding door at the front of the room, while at the back at the head of the table sat Mikisugi, with Tsumugu sitting a seat across on the left side.

"Its good to see you both are in one piece." Mikisugi spoke with his usual casual bravado.

Nui spoke arrogantly, "Yeaaaah those guys were small fry!"

Ryūko looked at Nui without turning her head in bored irritation as she rested her head on her hand propped up on the table via her elbow, "Hmph tell that to your hotel room…"

Mikisugi cut back in out of fear of confrontation between the two with a small bead of sweat rolling down his forehead, "Well for small fry they were pretty well equipped, life fiber infused ammunition and gear with quality fit for a private army."

Tsumugu added on as he continued to glare in Nui's direction, "No doubt supplied by the servants of the thread."

Nui rolled her eye, "Hmph they're obviously a red herring."

Mikisugi answered as he sat back in his seat placing a grasp on his chin "I don't doubt that, but this isn't a red herring we can afford to ignore, not while they are getting support from the servants…" He sat forward clasping his hands together and resting them on the table, "Not only are they gonna become more of a threat now but also it creates a disbalance between the other crime syndicates."

Tsumugu interjected, "Not to mention having connections with the servants of the thread means they could have information from the

inside of our agency, the police and just about anywhere else you can think of."

Mikisugi sighed, "Well you two don't need to worry about that for now-"

Nui suddenly interrupted standing up leaning onto the table with one hand with her other raised enthusiastically in the air, "Aaaaacctuallly~ I think me and Ryūko should partake in hunting down the High Akuma!"

Ryūko voiced a simple "Huh?!"

While Mikisugi questioned curiously, "Really? Why? I thought you said they are small fry."

Nui answered leaning back in her chair, "That might be true, but me and Ryūko here, well we're on the verge of a breakthrough!"

Ryūko added in, "That's news to me…"

Nui continued without reacting, "And I think that taking down the high Akuma could be just the right experience for me and her to complete our training."

Mikisugi raised an eyebrow, "A breakthrough? What kind?"

Nui answered with a smug expression, "Well it might be a little too difficult for you to understand right now~ But just know that its to empower our life fibers to recover some of our lost strength."

Mikisugi squinted back a gaze of suspicion, "I see…" He then turned to Tsumugu, "You have any problems with this?"

Tsumugu closed his eyes and sighed, "You know damn well I got a problem with her doing anything, but I know you ain't gonna listen to me about that. Besides that I don't give a fuck if these two wanna go on this wild goose chase."

Mikisugi shrugged, "Well I guess I got no objections either… Alright you two will officially be working with other Nudist beach members as well as the Police to take down the high Akuma."

Ryūko spoke up irritably, "I still don't remember agreeing to this but I guess I got no choice now. So working with the police huh?"

Mikisugi answered as he snuck a peek at a clock hanging on the right side wall, "Yeah in fact their representative should be here any moment now."

Just as Mikisugi said, a man in formal police uniform was walking through the corridors of the Nudist HQ towards the briefing room. They turned a corner and revealed himself to be the Police captain Hiroyuki. As the captain turned the corner, the entrance to the briefing room came into view, Along with Mako sitting on a plastic chair right beside the briefing room door, idly licking a large red lollipop.

The captain drew close to the briefing room which pulled Mako's attention away from her lollipop, causing her to suddenly leap up from her chair, startling the captain, "Oh crap its a police ma- I mean oh wow! Its a police man!"

The captain greeted her in his confusion, somewhat taken aback, "oh er… Hello there young lady, I would love to chat but I have an important meet-"

Mako suddenly interrupted, "You know my Dad is an emergency worker too! Well technically he's a private doctor, but he does take on some emergency patients!"

The captain was overcome with the awkwardness now combining with his confusion, "I… I see…"

Mako continued strangely urgently, "I don't mean private as in those back alley doctor types, no no! My Dad is a licenced professional! Completely L.E.G.A.L."

The Captain answered back with a befuddled expression, as he desperately looked for an exit from the conversation "Right, that's er… good, now while I would love to continue chatting, I have an important meeting to attend so if you would excuse me-"

Mako cut in again, enthusiastically, "Oh of course! Don't worry about me or my dad's back alley- I mean totally professional and legal doctor's clinic!"

The police captain continued looking confused as he went to push the briefing room door open, "A-alright? Take care then…"

Meanwhile Mako turned away with a proud smile on her face as she muttered to herself, "I did it dad! Just like you taught me."

The captain mumbled under his breath as he entered the briefing room, "What a strange girl." He then directed his attention towards the briefing room with all eyes upon him, "Sorry I'm late."

Mikisugi answered with a relaxed smirk, "Ah don't worry about it." He then turned his head to Ryūko and Nui, "Ryūko this is the captain of the Tokyo police department, officer Hiroyuki. You remember the good captain right Nui?"

Nui was checking her nails absentmindedly, "No not really."

While Ryūko greeted the captain with a simple "sup' nice to meet ya."

The captain answered back "Likewise, "Now… You're all familiar with the high Akuma by this point, but I assume that you didn't expect them to be the ones attacking you directly."

Mikisugi responded, "No but we now have reason to believe that the High Akuma are in bed with the servants of the threads."

The captain replied with recognition, "Hmph, well now that… complicates things, especially with this." The Captain took out a file

from his jacket before throwing it down on the briefing room table, causing a few documents followed by photographs to spill out.

Mikisugi leaned over to look at the photos, "What's… this?"

Hiroyuki added on sternly, as he slid a few of the photos over to where Mikisugi was sitting. "These images were taken of suspected arms dealers trading to the High Akuma. They look familiar?"

Mikisugi looked over each of the photographs carefully, each of the images displaying a blurry visage of a singular individual in each photo, some of them women, others men, all in fairly casual dress walking amongst the public, "Should they?"

The police captain sighed, "I was hoping they did… Because a few of these individuals have been identified as… Nudist beach agents."

Tsumugu's eyes widened as Mikisugi stood up from his seat, his face lost in shock, "What?!"

Hiroyuki closed his eyes with shame, "So you're as shocked as I was… At least this answered the question of where the High Akuma got the nudist beach gear from…"

Mikisugi sat back in his seat and muttered to himself in aggravation, "They've been at this for that long…?"

The captain raised an eyebrow, causing Nui to answer in Mikisugi's stead, "My apologies about our dear commander here, but you see the High Akuma being in bed with with the servants comes with certain funny little implications."

Mikisugi spoke up like he just retrieved his mind from a far away place, "Sorry about that… let me explain… We have reason to believe the servants of the thread are able to control people by manipulating their memories, making them believe that they themselves ARE servants."

The captains eyes widened for a moment before loosing as he took a seat out at the end of the briefing table, "Well… that does explain… A lot." The captain sighed, the information visibly weighing heavily upon him, "The truth is I haven't known who to trust for weeks now… especially after the raid we conducted together."

Mikisugi raised an eyebrow, "What do you mean?"

The captain sat back in his seat, arms crossed, "After the raid, we conducted investigations, continued interrogations, and eventually it became clear that the site we raided was set up to draw our attention, like they knew the raid was going to take place."

Tsumugu replied cynically, "You didn't let us know about this?"

Hiroyuki looked back in Tsumugu's direction with a stoic gaze, "No offense but after we discovered some nudist agents were trading with the High Akuma, I didn't exactly know who in Nudist beach I could trust."

Nui spoke up playfully, "Trust is such a fickle thing for you humans hm?"

Ryūko snapped back, "Like it isn't for the life fibers…"

The police captain continued the conversation, "Of course it didn't remain just nudist beach seemingly compromised for long… As the days rolled on, more attempts to prod at the high Akuma ended up with dud after dud, the information leaks were obvious, information that could only have come from my own department."

Ryūko gripped her chin in thought, "Could be just an ordinary Mole from the high Akuma."

The captain responded, "That's the thing… After I realised they were utilising moles, I made sure to be careful with how I circulated information, Triple checking the background of anyone involved. It

didn't make sense how the information was leaking. But if what you are saying about these servants is true…"

Mikisugi muttered with a troubled expression, "Then it means they've been embedded far longer than we thought…"

There was a moment of silence, the police captain, Mikisugi and Tsumugu all lost in serious thought. Ryūko looked around at them, the awkwardness of the situation provoking a bead of sweat to drip down her forehead. Nui meanwhile sat idly without a care in the world before casually pulling out a textile followed by a pair of knitting needles. The sound of her knitting filling the room…

"So the civilians from Akihabara?" Hiroyuki finally spoke up above Nui's knitting.

Mikisugi replied, "We believe… Future servants, at least some of them."

The captain sighed, a tinge of pain audible in his voice, "I… I see, we can try homing in on the missing persons reports, use those to try and identify servants… But that's gotta be hundreds of names at least…"

Mikisugi responded solemnly, "Yeah, I understand."

The silence crept back in before Nui interrupted, "Yes yes its all very sad, now can we move on already! A girl needs her relaxation time! And frankly this conversation is incredibly tiring."

The captain stood up from his seat, "Right well, I'll be in touch, remember be careful who you trust."

Mikisugi nodded, "Already are, not to mention we're refining our methods for sniffing out these brain washed moles. At any rate, thank you captain Hiroyuki."

The police captain nodded in return before quietly turning towards the briefing room door and making his exit.

With a sudden slam of the briefing room door, the police captain left the room, causing Nui to immediately sigh with relief, "Phew! I thought he would neeeeveeer leave!" She suddenly turned to Mikisugi, "Now when do we get to go home to Satsuki's house?"

There was a pause in the room as the confusion hit, with only Mikisugi answering to interrupt the awkwardness, "Wait what?"

Ryūko soon added on, "Yeah what the hell are you talking about?"

Nui answered with a playful shrug, "Why not?"

Tsumugu angrily snapped back, "The fuck you mean "why not?!" You were just attacked by a gang hit squad and lets not forget that you yourself are just a rabid dog on a short leash!"

Ryūko grumbled with irritation, "Not to mention Satsuki isn't gonna be happy to have you around…"

Nui clearly ignoring Tsumugu, turned to Ryūko, "Ah I'm sure it will be fiiiine, I can even let out the other Nui out of her pen~ *some of the time* ."

Suddenly clone Nui arose in a form made of blood, "Hey! I'm not an animal you know!"

True Nui smiled smugly, satisfied with clone Nui's reaction.

However before any more discourse between the two Nuis or Ryūko could occur, Mikisugi spoke up "Alright I'll allow it."

Ryūko and Tsumugu suddenly shouted in unison, "WHAT?!"

Mikisugi continued, "We did make a deal after all that you would get to live a "Normal" life, however the house will be under heavy surveillance so there's two conditions, don't antagonise, and When

Satsuki wants you to; let clone Nui take control. You know what will happen if you step out of line right…?"

Nui sighed, "yeah yeah, its off with my head."

Mikisugi finished his sentence with a tenacious grin, "Actually we're gonna start cracking down on your sewing supplies."

Nui gasped before retracting into stubborn poutiness, "Hmph I would like to see you try…"

Ryūko interjected with what almost seemed like a panicked plead, "Mikisugi, are you SURE this is a good idea?"

Mikisugi answered, "I understand your concerns, but if you both are gonna be working together to take on the high Akuma it would be best to stay in close proximity to one another."

Ryūko's frustrations set in as she snapped back angrily, "Oh right that *other* thing I'm getting roped into…"

Mikisugi shrugged, "You say that but you actually seemed pretty ok with the experiment we had going."

Ryūko grumbled irritably, "That was before we got attacked by a god damn Yakuza death squad…"

Mikisugi smiled earnestly, "Oh come on! The Ryūko I know wouldn't let something like that stop them from doing what they gotta do."

Ryūko rolled her eyes, "Well lets just say the "Ryūko you know" is a different one than the one that has to deal with Harime all god damn day."

Mikisugi frowned empathetically, "I get it Ryūko, its not easy… But Nui is a part of all of our lives now, we need to be able to learn to get used to that. Besides you already lasted a while alone with her without killing her. This time its gonna be you, Satsuki, Rei AND

Soroi while also being guarded heavily by nudist agents. I'm sure you can handle it."

Ryūko sighed deeply, "… Alright… But you're seriously gonna owe me AND Satsuki for this."

Mikisugi Smiled, "Thank you Ryūko, we'll try to get the hotel up and running as soon as possible."

Nui cheered as she wrapped her arms around Ryūko's shoulders, "Yaaaay! I can't wait! Its gonna be so much fun!"

Ryūko's face seemed lost in despair, "Satsuki is gonna kill me…"

Clone Nui appeared in her blood form, seeping out of true Nui's arm wrapped around Ryūko's back, "I-I'll do my best to help, Ryūko…"

Mikisugi interjected informing both true Nui and Ryūko, "We got a car outside ready to take you to Satsuki's house."

Nui replied with curious disappointment, "She isn't here in person?"

Mikisugi responded, "We've been keeping her on lockdown since we don't know if she too is a target of the High Akuma."

Ryūko nodded understandingly, "Makes sense."

Nui however, pouted irritably, "Ugh fiiiine I guess I can wait a bit longer to see her."

Mikisugi shot Nui a stern look, "Remember the moment Satsuki wants it, clone Nui takes over got it?"

Nui replied with a dismissive, "Hm" as she turned towards the board room door.

Ryūko got up from the table before silently shooting her own piercing gaze at Mikisugi as she turned to follow Nui out the board room.

Immediately upon opening the board room door, Mako's eyes sparked up, "Ryūko! Oh and scary Nui… You want a lollipop? They are giving out tons of them!"

Ryūko replied almost concerned as Nui Looked at Mako in disdain, "Wait how many of those have you been eating?" Meanwhile a female Nudist agent approached the group to stand by ready to lead them out of the facility.

As the group began to walk away led by the Nudist agent, Mikisugi sat with Tsumugu as he pondered to himself out loud, "Huh I wonder if she's picking up that icy cold stare from Satsuki…"

Tsumugu interrupted his train of thought however, "Those bastards are in the Tokyo police too…"

Mikisugi answered with a sigh, "Looks like that might be the case, seems like no matter where we look we're gonna find signs of them scurrying about in the shadows."

Tsumugu added on with a suspecting side glance at his friend, "Don't let it get to ya now."

Mikisugi chuckled shortly, "Oh please…"

Tsumugu grit his teeth in frustration as he hunched forward in his seat and stared at the floor, "I thought we would never have to deal with this feeling again…"

Mikiugi laid back in his seat and gazed up at the celling, "Yeah… I know what you mean."

Returning to Ryūko, Nui and Mako, the nudist agent leading them out the building showed them to a black car bearing the nudist beach insignia. The agent opening the car door for the three to step inside, Mako sat the left hand side, Ryūko in the middle and Nui on the right.

Ryūko turned to Mako, "Hey we're gonna be heading to Satsuki's, wanna come with?"

Mako spoke with a dramatic melancholy, "I would love too… But I think Mom and Dad are pretty worried about me, so I should better head home."

Ryūko smiled empathetically, "Right…"

Mako leaned forward to look at Nui, "Hey scary Nui?"

Nui became annoyed at the very sound of Mako's voice, "Ugh what is it bobblehead?" Nui's words provoking a look of aggravation from Ryūko.

Mako continued with a tentative, intimidated whimper, "I… I'm glad you and nice Nui are ok…"

Nui only gave an irritated "Hmph" as she turned to prop her elbow against the bottom of as she held up her face to stare absentmindedly out at the world passing by.

Mako retreated into silence out of fear of provoking the obviously annoyed Nui, while Ryūko's gaze at Nui softened into awkward uncomfortableness. A few more moments of driving passed by, the car eventually making a stop upon reaching Mako's home.

Mako stepped out of the car as well as Ryūko, the two hugging as Nui stared at the two of them in continued disdain. The two finished their hug as Ryūko turned to return to the car as Mako waved at both her and Nui. Ryūko sighed upon noticing Nui staring at her and Mako, only for Nui turn to face forward upon noticing Ryūko's gaze.

Nui spoke up as soon as Ryūko returned to the car, Ryuko remaining on the other side of the car seats, "Thank goodness, being that bobblehead's presence feels like an eternity."

Ryūko glanced at Nui with an exasperated sigh, "You're gonna behave yourself right? I may be able to deal with your bullshit, *most of the time* but Satsuki has treasured her peace time even more than I have."

Nui replied in an offended manner, "hm how cruel of you to even ask that!"

Ryūko rolled her eyes, "Come on Nui… We both know why I'm asking that."

Nui pouted irritably, "Hmph a few weeks ago you didn't know a single thing about my private life, and now you're acting like we've been together since birth!"

Ryūko grumbled aggravatedly, "Look I've spent enough time with you over the last few weeks to know how you act pisses me and Satsuki off, and besides I did hear some horror stories from Rei how much of a brat you were in your *free time.* "

Nui suddenly froze in playful shock, "She said what?!" Her shock transitioned to a mischievous smile. "Looks like I may need to make true on her punishment for "mouthing off" after all~"

Ryūko glared angrily, "Nui…"

True Nui hand waved her worries away, "I'm kidding I'm kidding! *Well mostly…* "

The agent driving the car suddenly spoke up, "We're approaching the home of Satsuki Kiryūin."

Ryūko muttered under her breath in anticipation, "Here we go…" Before speaking up to reply to the agent, "Thanks."

The car pulled up to a park in font of Satsuki's home and the car door on Ryūko's side quickly swung open as Ryūko stepped out. Just as Ryūko walked around the car to face the house, the door to

the home opened and Satsuki stepped out, she was wearing a comfortable blue sweater paired with black lounging pants, her face full of relief to see her sister safe.

"Ryūko, you're alrigh-" Satsuki spoke out to her sister only for her voice to trail off as Nui stepped out of the car to playfully wave to Satsuki, "What is the meaning of this?" Satsuki's face becoming rigid and stern.

Ryūko stood almost dumbstruck for how to respond, while Nui stood by her side smiling with a twinkle in her eye.

Eventually Ryūko drew in a sharp breath and answered, "Er… Nui here… Is gonna be staying with us for a little bit…"

Satsuki's gaze sharpened for a moment, before loosening as she closed her eyes to pinch the bridge of her nose while she sighed in tired frustration, "I… see…" She then turned to face the house while looking back over her shoulder, "Inside, now."

Ryūko stepped forward to pass Satsuki into her home, while Nui soon began to follow.

Satsuki however stopped Nui in her tracks by point at her, "Clone Nui, now."

True Nui rolled her eye in irritation, "Fiiiine." before changing over to clone Nui.

Clone Nui looked at Satsuki, empathetically, "I'm sorry about this Satsuki…" Before passing her to enter the house.

Satsuki stayed outside for a moment to glance over at a van for a fake extermination company parked down the street, her knowing the van contained a team of nudist agents, monitoring the Satsuki household, before she too walked inside and closed the house's front door.

Meanwhile, across the city stood a luxurious high rise, where a well dressed man walked through the buildings corridors on one of it's highest floors. The man's purple suit concealing many a tattoo including a certain depiction of a red Oni. The man's head was hanging low seemingly out of shame as he hesitantly approached a large double door at the centre of the corridor.

The man knocked on the double doors, provoking a reply from inside, "come in."

The man opened the double doors, revealing a lavish office-like space large enough to be a hotel suite. The room had a massive window at the back end of the room with a mahogany desk sitting before it facing the doors. On the right side of the room was a table with comfortable leather seats where six gruff men in their own sleek suits sat sipping Sakéout of ochokos.

Behind the desk stood another man, arms crossed as he faced the window staring at the streets bellow. He wore a black and white checkered suit that was clearly more expensive than the other men's suits. He had eyes like a fox and a slick comb over with strands of white intermingling amongst the mostly black hair. The man carried an air of authority overwhelming the atmosphere of the room.

"Well…?" The man at the window asked expectantly, his voice deep, entwined with sophistication.

The Yakuza with the purple suit answered, his voice oozing with melancholic frustration, "I'm… Sorry boss… But it looks like the servants aren't gonna help us with breaking out our guys this time, they said "They don't want us growing complacent in the expectation of having their assistance." well at least they were polite about it…"

One of the Yakuza members sitting at the table spoke up angrily, "That's a fuckin' insult! We shouldn't have to stand for having our pride shit on by some two bit terrorists!"

Another one replied, "But we have to, they hold all the cards, all the gear, all the information and besides, we shouldn't be wasting our time trying to break out some incompetent idiots who couldn't get the job done."

Another at the table retorted, "You say that like we didn't break out that crazy asshole with the mohawk, They couldn't get the job done either! With that modified "DTR" they had."

One more argued back, "Now hang on a minute, that guy might of been crazy to think they coulda won with that DTR, but the shit he's able to do with that tech and now life fibers? He's making something they haven't even imagined up in movies."

Another was about to bicker back before the boss silenced the room with a simple "Enough." He then turned around to address all the men with a strong cold look, "With the failure of the recent assault, the nudists will be looking to eliminate the threat we pose, meaning they will be on the attack this time, and they won't stop until we're completely quelled. But the High Akuma will not stand down to some naked fools who think they can stop the power of the highest demon. We'll show them what it truly means… To go to war with the Yakuza."